YOGIRAJ GAMBHIRNATH

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GORAKHNATH TEMPLE
GORAKHPUR

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YOGIRAJ GAMBHIRNATH

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GORAKHPUR

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उत्सर्ग पत्र

श्रीगुरुं परमानन्दं वन्दे स्वानन्द विग्रहम् ।
यस्य सान्निध्यमात्रेण चिदानन्दायते तनुः ॥
निर्गुणं वामभागे च सव्यभागेऽद्भुता निजा ।
मध्यभागे स्वयं पूर्ण स्तस्मै नाथाय ते नमः ॥
मुक्ता स्रुवन्ति पादाग्रे नखाग्रे जीवजातयः ।
मुक्तामुक्तागते र्मुक्तः सर्व्वत्र रमते स्थिरः ॥
वामभागे स्थितः शम्भुः सव्ये विष्णु स्तथैव च ।
मध्ये नाथः परं ज्योति स्तज्जयोति मर्त्तमोहरम् ॥
एकहस्ते धृत स्त्यागो भोग श्चैककरे स्वयम् ।
अलिप्त स्त्याग भोगाभ्यां सोऽवधूतः श्रियेऽस्तु नः ॥

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AVEDYANATH,
Gorakhnath Temple
Gorakhpur.

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INTRODUCTION

The conception of *Śiva* as the Supreme God and the practice of *Yoga* as the supreme means to the realisation of perfect union with Him has developed in India since the prehistoric age,—since time immemorial. Even in the age of what is called the Indus Civilisation,—which in the opinion of modern historians was anterior to the age of Vedic Civilisation,—this *Śiva*-cult and this *Yoga*-system of self-discipline were in a sufficiently advanced state. This is regarded as definitely substantiated by the relics of that by-gone age. Civilisations in their external features grow and decay and die out in accordance with the Divine plan; but truth never dies. *Śaiva-Sampradáya* and *Yoga-sádhaná* have continued to exist and develop without break up to this day.

From the earliest times the conception of *Śiva* has been associated with the ideas of *Yoga*, *Jnána* and *Tyága*. He is contemplated upon as *Yogiśwara* (Lord of the *Yogis*), *Jnániśwara* (Lord of the *Jnánis*) and *Tyágiswara* (Lord of the *Tyágis*). He is thought of as the eternally perfect Ideal of *Yoga-sádhaná*, inasmuch as He is eternally in perfect blissful union with Himself, being eternally free from all desires and passions, eternally untouched by actions and their consequences, eternally above all sorrows and bondages, eternally immersed in *samádhi* and eternally lording over *Prakriti* without any effort or conscious self-exertion. He is also conceived as the eternally perfect Ideal of *Jnána-sádhaná*, inasmuch as He is eternally in the supersensuous, supra-mental, supra-intellectual state, and His entire nature is eternally illumined by perfect Self-Knowledge, perfect Truth-Consciousness. He also represents the perfect Ideal of *Tyága* or Renunciation, since He has no ego, no sense of possession, no Me and Mine, no attachment and aversion, no worldward tendency. It is this supreme Ideal which the *Yogis*, *Jnánis* and *Tyágis* or *Sannyásis* worship in the form of Śiva.

The most remarkable feature in the *Śiva*-cult is that the Supreme Lord is conceived, not in terms of extraordinary powers and grandeurs, nor in terms of Creatorship and Rulership of the world, nor in terms of any aristocratic majesty, but in terms of the Supreme Spiritual Ideal of human life. He is *Śiva*, the Good, the perfect Fulfilment of Life. He is Perfect Peace and Harmony, Perfect Unity and Beauty, Perfect Love and Sweetness, Perfect Bliss and Tranquillity. He is supremely unconcerned about the affairs of the world. He eternally enjoys the absolute Fulness of Life within Himself. He does nothing actively and voluntarily. He has no motive for doing anything. But He is the eternal Source of Inspiration and Hope and Strength to those who seek for the spiritual fulfilment of life. The very thought of Him awakens and activates the spiritual urge which lies dormant in the human nature and leads man towards the Highest Good. He is therefore conceived as the eternal *Guru* (Spiritual Guide) to all seekers of the ultimate Truth and Good. He illumines the minds and hearts of all spiritual aspirants.

This implies that He makes the minds and hearts of His worshippers indifferent to the relative finite and transitory good of their worldly life, makes them indifferent to their domestic and social duties and obligations, creates in them a rather defiant attitude towards the stringent rules and regulations of the normal social life devoted to worldly prospects, and leads them towards the supra-mundane spiritual Ideal. Under His inspiration people feel a tendency to renounce the worldly life, to go to solitary hills and forests and cremation grounds, to devote their whole energy to the systematic practice of *Yoga* and *Jnána* so as to attain the spiritual perfection of life which is eternally enjoyed by Him. Hence the ardent worshippers of *Śiva* would generally prefer *sánnyása* life to *grihastha* life, and thus *Śaivism* led to *Sannyásism* and asceticism.

This *Śiva*-cult does not seem to have been to the liking of the early Vedic Aryans. What is called the Vedic Age was the age of the expansion and consolidation of the Vedic society.

It was a magnificently creative age for the A'ryyas. They were inspired by heroic and noble ideals of worldly life. They formed a splendid *A'dhidaivic* conception of the universe, according to which all the physical forces of the world were under the governance of *Devas*,—self-shining Moral Powers, controlling all orders of phenomena, including even the destinies of men, in conformity to eternal moral laws (*Rita*). They formed conceptions of these *Devas*,—these world-governing Moral Agencies,—in terms of their supernatural powers and splendours and awe-inspiring majesty, in terms of their greatness manifested in subduing the evil forces of the world and maintaining order and harmony and the standard of goodness in this diversified universe. They had a planned life with well-codified rules and regulations, and they devised appropriate ways and means for bringing the great Moral Powers in their favour. They conceived the Ideal of Heaven on the basis of what they hoped for in the world,—as the realm of everlasting happiness and deathless vigorous life.

The Vedic thinkers were fully convinced that real and permanent happiness was the fruit of moral goodness (*Dharma*), and that the practice of goodness in actual life involved the practice of sacrifice,—the sacrifice of the present pleasures for the sake of higher and more durable pleasure. Hence Sacrifice (*yajna*) was accepted by them as the principle of progressive life. They conceived various kinds of sacrifices, and these sacrifices were associated with various kinds of rituals and religious observances. The entire social organisation was based upon the principle of Sacrifice, which practically meant mutual service, performed in a spirit of worship to the Gods, —the Divine Powers ruling over human destinies. There was progressive division of services or social duties, along with the development and expansion of the society. Division of the society into *Varnas* (classes) and *A'sramas* (stages) was the result. The society was thus expanded and consolidated on the principle of Sacrifice and mutual service and moral elevation in worldly life.

This being the age of creation, expansion and consolidation for the Aryan society, the Spirit of Renunciation and Meditation was not much encouraged nor given due recognition and homage. The majestic Gods of Creation and Regulation, the powerful Gods who could destroy the forces of disorder and establish harmony and prosperity in the human society, the bountiful Gods who were disposed to confer earthly benefits upon their worshippers, were more eulogized and honoured than the God of Renunciation and Meditation and Spiritual Illumination by the thought-leaders of the society. Hence in the Vedic Mantras and the Vedic sacrifices *Śiva* had no important position. The Supreme God was conceived in terms of the Supreme Creative Will and Power, and not in terms of the Supreme Spiritual Ideal of Human Life. The Ideal of *Swarga* (a life of unending happiness in Heaven) had greater influence upon the minds of the people than the Ideal of *Moksha* (liberation from all kinds of worldly bondage). *Yoga*, *Jnána* and *Tyága* were cultivated by the exceptional few as a secret *Vidyá* for the attainment of *Moksha* or the ultimate end of life.

The *Śiva*-cult and the *Yoga-Vidyá* went on silently expanding their spiritual domain over the minds of the best thinkers and truth-seekers of the Vedic society. We find ample evidence of this in the *Upanishads*. The *Rishis* of the *Upanishads* lost faith in the efficacy of the ritualistic religion (*Karma-Kánda*) of the early Vedas as a means to the attainment of perfection in life. All the *Vedas* and the *Vedángas* are spoken of as *Apará-Vidyá* (lower knowledge not leading to Truth). *Pará-Vidyá* (true knowledge) is that *yayá tad aksharam adhigamyate* (by which that Eternal Changeless Reality is perfectly attained). This *Pará-Vidyá* is evidently *Yoga-Vidyá*, which could not be attained from the study of the *Vedas* and the *Vedángas*. The adherents of the *Veda-márga* (the path of Vedic sacrificial works) are sometimes condemned as "the blind led by the blind." The same attitude towards the old Vedic path is found in the *Bhagavad-Gitá* as well.

In some of the *Upanishads* it is explicitly said that the ultimate Truth can be attained only by means of *Sánkhya* (*Jnána*) and *Yoga*. It is said that the Ultimate Source of all existences can be actually seen through *Dhyána-Yoga*. The Supreme Reality is described as *S'ántam S'ivam Adwaitam*,—absolutely tranquil, absolutely good and absolutely differenceless. It is said that when nothing else exists,—no day or night, no *sat* or *asat*,—*S'iva* alone exists. There are numerous references in the *Upanishads*, showing that *Śiva* as conceived by the early *Yogis* in terms of the highest spiritual ideal of human life was accepted by Upanishadic *Rishis* as the Supreme Non-dual Reality and the Absolute Ground of all existence, and that *Yoga-Vidyá* was recognised by them as the means to the realisation of oneness with this Supreme Spirit. The Ultimate Ideal of life was equated by them with the Ultimate Creator, and the Creator was conceived as the changeless, effortless, self-shining, self-perfect Spirit, *i.e. S'iva*. The *Upanishads* generally speak of this Supreme Spirit as *Brahma* (in the neuter gender), which means the Greatest, the Supreme, and now and then as *Śiva*. But it is quite clear that the *S'aiva* Ideal and the *S'aiva* method of spiritual discipline captured the best minds of the Vedic society.

Gradually, a reconciliation was arrived at between the *Pravritti-Márga* (the path of Action) of the *Vedas* and the *Nivritti-Márga* (the path of Renunciation) of the *Śiva* school. *Śiva* was recognised as *Mahádeva* (Supreme Deity), *Maheśwara* (Supreme Lord), *Devádideva* (the First Deity of all Deities), *Iśana* (Controller of all), *S'ankara* (Doer of Good), etc. *Moksha* was accepted as the final goal of life, and Renunciation and *Yoga* and *Jnána* as the direct ways to this goal. But due performance of domestic and social duties in accordance with the injunctions of the *Vedas* was considered necessary for the purification of the body and the mind and the attainment of fitness for the esoteric *Yoga-Jnána Sádhaná*.

Further, *Śiva* was conceived as the Husband of *Umá Haimavati*, who was *Brahma-Vidyá* personified in the *Kena*

Upanishad, and who revealed *Brahma* to the greatest of the Vedic Gods,—*Indra*, *Váyu* and *Agni*. *Umá* was also identified with *Mulá Prakriti* and *Máyá-Śakti* and was thus conceived as the Mother of the universe,—the self-conscious and self-modifying Material Cause of the cosmic order. *Śiva*, though eternally changeless, actionless, self-fulfilled, and self-enjoying Spirit, was as the Husband of *Umá* conceived to be the Father of the universe as well as the supreme Teacher of perfect knowledge,—the Bestower of Divine Light. Though worldly men conceived Him as the Father of all creatures,—the Efficient Cause of the world,—and worshipped Him and prayed to Him for the fulfilment of their worldly desires, seekers of *Moksha* (liberation from the bondage of the world) took greater delight in thinking of Him as the Destroyer of the world through the bestowal of perfect knowledge upon His devotees.

Creation consists in the diversification of the One,—the manifestation of the One as many; Preservation consists in the maintenance of harmony and order among the diversities; while Destruction consists in the unification of the diversities, —the restoration of the oneness of the many. Creative and preservative processes are based upon the veiling of the transcendent oneness of the Supreme Spirit,—the Absolute Reality. Truth-seekers of the highest order want to get rid of the diversities and to be united with the One. This union with the Supreme Spirit is possible only through perfect knowledge, which destroys the veil and thereby destroys the diversities of the world as realities from their view. Therefore, the God of Knowledge, Who is on that account the God of Destruction, is the Supreme Beloved of the seekers of *Moksha*,—the *Yogis*, the *Sannyásis*, the *Jnánis*. Accordingly, with the refinement of the mind and the heart and the intellect, the *Śiva*-ideal naturally becomes more and more appealing. As the people became spiritually minded, *Śiva* grew to be the most popular God in India, though in their worldly and social life they continued to worship the Vedic Gods for the satisfaction of their worldly needs and ambitions.

There is no doubt that *Śaivism* played a very important part in liberalising, spiritualising and popularising the religious, moral and social outlook of the Vedic Aryans in the post-Vedic age, and in bringing about a spiritual and cultural amalgamation of the various races and tribes and clans with the Aryans in all parts of this great sub-continent. *Śiva*, being not bound by the conventionalism of the Vedic Brahmanical Gods, was easily approachable to men, women and children of all classes and races and tribes. No class of people, no section of God's creatures, was untouchable to *Śiva*, the Supreme Spirit, the Soul of all. The worship of *Śiva* did not require any complicated rituals, any difficult mantras, any oblations not easily procurable, and hence the intermediation of any specialists or priests. The God of Gods is most easily pleased,—He is *A'śutosha*. Moreover, the *Śiva*-cult was preached by *Yogis*, *Yatis*, *Sannyásis*, homeless mendicants, who, unlike the Brahman teachers of the *Veda-márga*, were free from worldly obligations and would freely move about in all parts of the country, in plains and hills and forests, and mix with all sorts of people without distinction of caste or race or sex. The people also would be naturally charmed by their most simple and accommodating modes of life, their freedom from worldly cares and anxieties, their calm and joyful disposition in all circumstances, their capacity to endure smilingly all kinds of hardships, their liberality of outlook and behaviour and purity of character, their non-ritualistic and non-metaphysical simple instructions for moral and spiritual elevation, and not unoften also by their occult knowledge and powers born of yogic culture.

Symbol-worship (*Linga-upásaná* or *Pratika-upásaná*) in some form or other grows as part and parcel of every religion. As the human mind rises to higher and higher realms of the Spirit, the necessity for symbols (*linga* or *pratika*) is more and more urgently felt for popularising the abstract concepts of the higher planes,—for presenting the spiritual ideas in concrete material forms before the minds of the lower planes in order to raise them up to the higher planes. A symbol was necessary for

popularising the highly spiritual concept of *Śiva* and initiating the truth-seekers into the meditation of the Supreme Spirit. As the concept of *Śiva* implies perfect self-knowledge, perfect illumination of the whole being, *light* was accepted as the most appropriate symbol (*linga*) for *Śiva*. *Śiva*-worship meant the worship of Light, while the worship of Nature (*Prakriti*), the adoration of the apparently glorious Forces of the world and the search for worldly happiness in this life or in the life after death, meant the worship of Darkness (*Andham Tamas*). The Sun and Fire were sometimes accepted as symbols (*linga*) for *Śiva*, since they were sources of light in this world. Their burning character was also taken into account, for *Śiva* meant the burning of *Káma* (Desire, Lust for sensuous enjoyment, Hankering for worldly objects). A steady flame of light, destroying the darkness of ignorance and burning away all the worldly desires and attachments, was conceived as a suitable symbol (*linga*) for the Supreme Spirit, Who was described as *Param-Jyoti*, the Supreme Light, the one calm and blissful self-shining Reality. Such a flame of light was kept burning day and night in places of worship of *Śiva* and was spoken of as *Jyotir-linga* or *Akhanda-Jyoti* by the worshippers. In order to give a stable form to this *Jyotir-linga* and to instal it all over the land and present this *Śiva*-symbol to all classes of spiritual aspirants, hard stone was resorted to. Stone was given the shape of a flame of light and installed as *S'iva-linga* (symbol for *Śiva*).

It may be noted in this connection that there is a sad misconception prevailing in the minds of a good many people with regard to the holy significance of the universally accepted *linga* (symbol) of *Śiva*. To many the *linga* symbolizes the male organ (*śiśna*) and implies a form of phallic worship. The special application of the word *linga* in this sense [(as opposed to *yoni* (meaning the female organ)] as well as the flame-shape of the *Śiva*-symbol is the cause of this confusion. Some suppose it to be a symbol for the creative energy manifested in nature. This is only a somewhat refined expression of the same

misconception. Some thinkers trace the origin of this symbol to the *Yupa-Kástha* (sacrificial post) used in *Yajna* for tying down the animals for sacrifice. These thinkers also ignore the fact that the *S'iva-linga* was devised by persons who were averse to Vedic *karma-kánda* and animal-sacrifice. The worshippers of *Śiva* were the advocates of Renunciation, seekers of Spiritual Illumination, aspirants for the realisation of the Supreme Spirit in themselves. They were not admirers of the Creative Will or the Generating Power of God. To them creation was bondage, and liberation was the ideal. Anything that might rouse the idea of sexual intercourse in the mind was repulsive to them. Their conception of *Śiva* was that of *Káma-ari* (the destroyer of lust). *Śiva* was the Master and Lord of *Prakriti* or the Creative Energy of the universe, in the sense that She was perfectly under His control, that He was not in the least attracted towards Her or affected by Her operations, that He wholly transcended Her and Her world, while She entirely depended upon Him for Her existence and Her self-revelation. The Fatherhood in relation to the world of diversities was only ascribed to Him, because He was the sole self-existent, self-conscious Reality and the Sustainer and Illuminer of *Prakriti*, the Mother-Power. He is sometimes represented as sitting in a state of perfect *samádhi* upon the *Yoni-pitha, i.e.* the Mother-Power, as His seat. Sometimes the Mother-Power,—Káli,—is represented as dancing on His breast as Her *Adhisthána* (Support), while He is lying down just as a *Śava* (dead body), *i.e.* perfectly undisturbed in His serene consciousness by Her movements. Sometimes He is represented as enjoying the bliss of *Samádhi* with the Mother-Power shining in a part of His body (*Ardha-Nári-Iśwara*). All these representations emphasize the transcendent character of *Śiva*, above *Prakriti*, though in touch with *Prakriti*. How can the generative organ or the sacrificial post be a *linga* or symbol for such *Śiva* ? How can anything, implying a tendency for creation or propagation of species, or for sensuous enjoyment or for worldly advancement, be chosen by the spiritual aspirants of this school as *S'iva-linga* ?

It was obviously incompatible with the fundamental conception of *Śiva* and with the character and outlook of the ancient founders and leaders of the *Śiva* school of religion and philosophy to adopt as the symbol (*linga*) of *Śiva* anything which might have any sexual reference or any reference to the creative operation of God or Nature or any reference to any ritualistic sacrificial practice. Even if there had been in the remote past any such symbol worshipped by the common folk, those *yogi jnáni tyági* worshippers of *Mahá-Yogiśwara Mahá-Jnániśwara Mahá-Tyagiśwara Śiva* would have certainly condemned and discarded it. Light was the universally recognised symbol for Knowledge, and *Śiva*-worshippers adopted this as the symbol for *Śiva*. A steady, unextinguishable flame of light (*Anirvána-Dipa*) was placed before the spiritual aspirant as the *S'iva-linga* (symbol of the Supreme Spirit) as well as the symbol of the supreme spiritual Ideal of human life. For the purpose of widely preaching this gospel of *Yoga*, *Jnána* and *Tyága*, and bringing *Śiva* very near to the common people all over the world, the teachers conceived the idea of giving stone the form of a flame of light and installing it as a convenient symbol for *Śiva*. Such stony *S'iva-lingas* were installed permanently, wherever these *yogis*,—these world-renouncing *Śaiva-sannyásis*,—would go and temporarily settle for their *sádhaná*,—in hills and forests, in villages and towns, on cremation-grounds and banks of holy rivers. All sorts of people could offer their worship and cultivate their religious sentiments, with the inspiring idea that the Supreme Spirit was present before them. Thus *S'aivism* spread in all parts of the land.

Triśula (the holy trident) has long been recognised as another symbol for *Śiva* or *S'aivism*. It is a weapon with which *Śiva* is conceived to have killed the *Asura*, who dwelt in the three *puras* (homes). The *Asura* represents the Ego, and the three *puras* refer to the gross body, the subtle body and the causal body. *Śiva*, with His spiritual weapon of *Vairágya*, *Jnána* and *Samádhi*, destroys the three bodies, kills the Ego, frees the human consciousness from all kinds of bondage and unites it

with Himself. The worship of *Triśula* means the practice of *Vairágya*, *Jnána* and *Samádhi*. *Ashes* also are used by *S'aivites* as a symbol, implying the ideal of the destruction of or release from all diversities of the world. In this way *S'aivism* spread the Ideal of *Tyága*, *Jnána* and *Yoga* in the human society.

In course of time numerous religious systems grew in India. India was a land of researches for the discovery of the Ultimate Truth about the world-order, the Ultimate Ideal of human life, the easiest and surest method of self-discipline for knowing the Truth and realising the Ideal, the powers hidden in the human nature and the ways and means for activating and harmonising and unifying them, and so on. Perfect freedom was enjoyed by truth-seekers and spiritual aspirants for carrying on these researches. In the fields of religion and philosophy their freedom was unchecked, though in the fields of social morality they might be governed by the principles accepted by the society as a whole. On account of this freedom the land was fertile for the origination and development of various schools of philosophy and religion. In most cases their bond of unity was their common allegiance to the Vedic principles and their adaptation with the demands of the society based on those principles. They were, therefore, recognised as orthodox schools. Those that revolted against the fundamental principles of the *Védas* were condemned as heterodox. Even at the time of the advent of Buddha and Mahavira there were many such systems of philosophy and religion and they grew side by side. *yogic* culture was freely adopted by almost all the religious sects, orthodox as well as heterodox, as the most effective means to the attainment of mastery over the senses and the mind, freedom from desires and passions, and fitness for spiritual illumination.

There are adequate evidences to show that in the early ages the *S'aiva* schools were the most powerful and most wide-spread among all the religio-philosophical schools which prevailed in India. Particular schools had limited spheres of influence in particular parts of the country. But *S'aivism*

was spread all over the country, and even outside the borders of India. Many great thinkers and *Yoga-siddha Mahápurushas* flourished in the lap of the *S'aiva* cult. In due course *S'aivism* also was divided into a number of subsects, led by illustrious *S'aiva Yogis*. In different parts of the country it took different forms. They differed from one another in the external features of their philosophical views and religious practices. The fundamental principles of course remained the same. The *Vaishnava* or the *Bhágavata* cult, though old enough, did not come into such prominence till the Middle Ages, when a good many illustrious saints and teachers, born in different provinces of India, founded a good many *Vaishnava* sects in different names on the basis of the ancient *Vaishnava* principles and gave a new life to the *Bhakti sádhaná* in the country. The *S'ákta* school was an offshoot of the *S'aiva* cult and acquired prominence from the Middle Ages in some provinces.

Gorakhnath or Goraksha-Nátha was an exceptionally gifted *S'aiva-Yogi*, who exercised an unparalleled influence upon the spiritual atmosphere of India, and united a large number of *S'aiva* schools under his leadership. Probably in the post-Buddhistic age, save and except A'chárya S'ankara, no other religious teacher could dominate over the minds and hearts of all sections of the Indian Humanity in all parts of the country for all times to such an extent as *Yogi-guru* Gorakhnath did. S'ankara gave a new life to Hinduism as a whole on the basis of the immortal teachings of the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad-Gitá* and Veda-Vyása's *Vedánta-Darśan*. Gorakhnath did the same on the basis of the most practical spiritual teachings of the long line of *Siddha-Yogis* of the *S'aiva* cult. He also recognised the authority of the *Upanishads, Gitá* and *Vedanta*. S'ankara, however, being predominantly a mighty philosopher, was in direct contact chiefly with the thought-leaders of the society, who conveyed his teachings to lower levels of the community. Gorakhnath was a mighty *Yogi* with superhuman spiritual powers, and his influence was directly felt by all sections of people. He was revered as a veritable Incarnation of *Śiva*,

the Supreme Spirit, the eternal *Guru* of all generations of spiritual aspirants and the God of all Gods. The *sampradáya* which he organised by uniting together the various subsects of *S'aiva-Yogis* is known as the *Nátha-Yogi* or *Siddha-Yogi Sampradáya.* It is one of the most living religious organisations of India even in the present age. Those who are interested in *Yoga-sádhaná* always look for guidance to the *Siddha-Yogis* of this sect, and the sect is never without *Yogis* and *Jnanis* of the highest order of spiritual illumination. The sect has its cultural centres, —its monasteries, temples, *maths*, etc.,—all over the vast country. There are thousands of homeless wandering monks of this sect, setting before the people examples of renunciation and austerities, and keeping aloft the standard of spirituality. The *sampradáya* has a number of branches, called *panths*, and different *panths* have different spheres of influence and different main centres. But they all adore Gorakhnath as *Śiva-*Incarnate and as the chief *Guru* of all *yogis*, and their philosophical views and religious principles are practically the same. Gorakhpur is one of the principal centres of this great *sampradáya*. It is believed to have been a place of *yoga-sádhaná* of Gorakhnoth for a pretty long period. Hence it is a sacred place of pilgrimage to all his followers as well as to all orders of spiritual aspirants.

Modern historians have not as yet been able to ascertain the time and place of birth of Gorakhnath. Legendary tales about his wonderful life and miraculous deeds and merciful acts are current among the ordinary people of Tibet, Nepal, Assam, Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Maharastra, Gujrat and almost ali the other provinces of India. The *sampradáya* has a vast literature in Sanskrit, the sacred language of India, as well as in many of the provincial dialects, such as, Bengali, Hindi, Pujabi, Marathi, Gujrati, etc. The majority of these works have not yet come out in printed forms. Many of the illustrious saints and religious teachers who popularised *Vaishnavism* in diverse forms in the Middle Ages referred to Gorakhnath and his *Yogi-Sampraáaya* in the most respectful terms

and sometimes criticised their doctrines and methods of *sádhaná*. Some of them, as far back as the twelfth century, felt proud in claiming their spiritual descent from Gorakhnath. Even the biography of S'ankara has reference to this great *Yogi*. There is a tradition that Jesus Christ, during the period of his mysterious disappearance, came to the Himalayas and took lessons on *Yoga* and *Jnána* from a *Náth-Yogi* saint. The association of the term 'Náth' with the names of many of the oldest and most celebrated places of pilgrimage and their presiding Deities might not be without historical significance,—such as, Amarnath, Kedarnath, Badrinath, Adinath, Chandranath, Muktinath, etc., etc,. *Mahájogi* Matsyendranath, the *Guru* of Gorakhnath, is traditionally identified with *Bodhisattwa Avalokiteswar*, who is greatly eulogised in the Buddhist scriptures. He is also known as one of the greatest teachers of *Tántric sádhana*. There are various facts and traditions which point to the relative antiquity of *Náth-Yogi sampradáya*; but still there is no unassailable historical evidence on which any definite conclusion about the time and birth-place of Gorakhnath can be based. His native province is supposed by some to have been East Bengal, by some Mahárástra, by some the Punjab, and so on. He seems to have been a ubiquitous personality, exercising his spiritual influence upon the people of different provinces at the same time and for several centuries. The orthodox monks of his *sampradáya* cut short the problem by asserting that Gorakhnath, being *Śiva* Himself, had no birth or death, that He appears in bodily forms whenever He pleases for the good of His creatures, exhibits His wonderful life of *sádhaná* and *siddhi* and preaches the eternal Truth and the means to its realisation. In all the *yugas* He appeared in one form or another. Historians are, however, concerned with historical Gorakhnath, and hence their investigations for finding out the time and place of such an illustrious personality must continue.

The Sanskrit works on the *S'iva*-cult and *Yoga-sádhana* are numerous. But it has always been emphasised that effective

culture of *Yoga* and *Jnána* for the attainment of absolute Truth and Peace is possible only under the direct guidance of a competent *Guru*, who has himself reached the goal and has become identified with *Śiva*. The original authoritative treatises are believed to have come from *Śiva* Himself. These are called *S'iva-ágamas*. These *A'gamas* are equally sacred to the *Śaivas* and *S'áktas*. They are supposed to be as old at least as the *Vedas*. The earliest texts are scarcely available. But the continuity of the production of newer and newer treatises on the basis of the old was never broken. Many of the texts available now are in the form of instruction by *Śiva* to *Párvati*. Many other important works are attributed to the enlightened *yogi* teachers of the ancient times,—such as, Yajnavalka, Gheranda, Dattátreya and others. A good many *Upanishads* represent the *Śaiva* view and the *Yoga-sádhaná* of the school. There are treatises embodying the teachings of Gorakhnath's *Guru* Matsyendranath and the latter's *Guru A'dinath*. There are many works of Gorakhnath's illustrious disciples and followers. The *Gitá*, the *Yoga-Vásistha*, and *Pátanjala Yoga-Darshana* are greatly honoured by the sect.

Many texts are associated with Gorakhnath's name and their authorship is attributed to him. From the books themselves it is very difficult to be sure about the authors, as is the case with early religious works in general. *Gorakh-Sanhitá*, *Gorakh-S'ataka*, *Gorakh-Kalpa*, *Gorakh-Paddhati*, *Siddhánta-Paddhati*, *Siddha-Siddhánta-Paddhati*, *Yoga-Siddhánta-Paddhati*, *Jnánámrita*, and a good many other works are ascribed to Gorakhnath. We cannot be sure that he himself wrote all these books. We may however take it that they incorporate the teachings of the great Master on *Yoga*, *Jnána* and various methods of moral and spiritual self-discipline. *Siddha-Siddhánta-Paddhati* is a book of considerable philosophical importance. *Hatha-Yoga-Pradipika* by Swatmaráma Yogindra Chintámani is a very popular and important book of this school. *Gorakh-Siddhánta-Sangraha*, *Siddha-Siddhánta-Sangraha* and many other compendiums were written by competent *yogis* in later times to popularise the

Yoga system, besides commentaries on the older immortal works. Gorakhnath literature in the various provincial dialects also had great value in popularising the teachings of the Master among people of all strata of the society. Many of those poetical works and musical compositions represent the literature of the country in the period prior to the growth of the *Vaishnava* literature. They are still sung by village people. They show how popular the *S'aiva* teachings were in the early Middle Ages.

In pursuance of the teachings of the long line of enlightened *Mahāyogis*, Gorakhnath also preached that *Śiva* is the Absolute Reality. According to him as well as all the *yogi* teachers, *Śiva* is not to be conceived as one great God among so many Gods glorified the in *Vedas*, *Purānas* and *Tantras*, and worshipped by the Hindus. He is the Supreme Spirit, the Source of all existences, the innermost Self of all beings, the Indwelling Regulator of the cosmic order, the Final Goal of man's conscious life. All particular Gods and Goddesses are His self-manifestations, partial self-expressions of His infinite glories, and are non-different from Him. He appears in diverse names and forms. He is essentially without any special name or special form, but all names and forms are His, He being the Soul of them all. He is spoken of as *Brahma* by the *Upanishads* and the *Vedantists*. He is the *Iśwara* of Patanjali's *Yoga-Sutras*. He is the *Krishna-tattwa* as revealed in the Gita, and as experienced by the *Vaishnavas* in the highest plane of their spiritual illumination. He is the *Mother-Power* of the universe, addressed as *Kāli* or *Durgā* or by other names by the *S'āktas*. He is the Ultimate Object of worship of all devotees of all religious sects, whatever names or forms or concepts they may adopt for concentrating their minds and hearts upon Him, He being the ultimate Truth of all existence.

The sense of difference is *Avidyā* (Ignorance) and the source of bondage and sorrow; the realisation of the true spiritual unity of all is the true *Vidyā* or *Jnāna* (Knowledge), this is *Moksha* or liberation from all bondage and sorrow, and this is

not attainable without shaking off the slavery of particular names and forms and concepts and experiencing the One Absolute Spirit within the soul and the universe. The systematic practice of *Yoga* under expert guidance is required for being blessed with this experience; because without purification of the body, the senses, the nervous system, the mind, the heart and the intellect, without acquirement of control over the mental and sensuous propensities and passions, without development of will and power for concentrating the whole mental and intellectual energy upon the supreme Spiritual Reality, human consciousness cannot attain fitness for this deepest experience of the spiritual unity of all existence. Therefore, *Yoga* is the path to the Supreme Knowledge, which means the realisation of *S'ivahood.* This is the fundamental viewpoint of this school.

According to Gorakhnath and the *Náth-Yogi* teachers, *Śiva,*—the Absolute Spirit,—has eternally a transcendent as well as a dynamic aspect. In His dynamic aspect He is generally called *S'akti* (Power). The two aspects are not differentiated from each other. *Śivasyábhyantare Śakti Śakterabhyantare Śivah—Śiva* is immanent in *Śakti* and *Śakti* is immanent in *Śiva.* The two are eternally identical with each other. The Absolute Spirit as *Being* is *Śiva* and as *Becoming* is *Śakti.* In the nature of the Absolute Spirit there is no real difference. He is eternally one perfect self-existent, self-conscious, self-fulfilled, self-enjoying Spirit. His dynamic nature is manifested in relation to the beginningless and endless cosmic order and the countless *Jivas* (finite spirits) within it. He manifests Himself in all forms of plurality in the spatio-temporal order, called the *Jagat* (ever-changing universe). They are, therefore, essentially non-different from Him. In the ceaseless act of His self-revelation in diverse finite and changing forms in time and space, He requires no special will and effort, because His nature is perfectly dynamic and there is no resisting force which He has to overcome. His transcendent self-luminous and self-enjoying character is accordingly in no way affected

by the self-expressions of His infinite *Śakti*. He is thus eternally active and eternally inactive, eternally self-revealing and eternally transcendent, eternally *saguna* and eternally *nirguna*, eternally *Śakti* and eternally *Śiva*.

The character of *S'akti* is *parináma*, *i.e.* self-modification, which involves causation, change, creation and sustenance and destruction. According to *Yogi* teachers, *Śakti* manifests itself principally in the forms of *Samkocha* (involution) and *Vikáśa* (evolution), contraction and expansion, unification and diversification. The whole cosmic order consists in the evolution of diversities from unity and again the involution of diversities into unity. What is involved in the cause becomes evolved through the process of causation or creation, and what is evolved in the forms of effects or created objects is again involved in the original cause through the process of destruction or dissolution. This process of creation and destruction,—the process of evolution and involution—is going on eternally in time. This is the self-manifestation of *Śiva* as *Śakti*.

In the *Siddha-Siddhánta-Paddhati*, which is an important philosophical work attributed to Gorakhnath, there is an interesting exposition of the gradual unfoldment of *Śakti*, leading to the creation of the world of living and non-living, conscious and unconscious, diverse orders of finite beings. The exposition starts with the conception of the Absolute One, *Śiva*, Who is the ultimate Ground and Substratum of all diversities. When there is no action nor actor, no cause nor causality, no differentiation of unity nor unification of diversities, when the Supreme Spirit is absolutely unmanifested and exists in and by Himself, He is then one nameless (*Anáma*), self-luminous (*Swaprakáśa*, *Swayam-jyoti*) pure Being. This is, phenomenally speaking, the state of *Maháþralaya*, and metaphysically speaking, the transcendent character of *Śiva*. He has within Him His Own Power (*Nijá S'akti*), which is of the nature of Pure Contentless Will (*Ichchhá-mátra-dharmá*) and is perfectly identical with the Owner of the Will (*Dharmi*). Thus in the pre-creational stage *S'akti* is present in absolute union with *Śiva*. The

Power, having no manner of manifestation, not even any subtle impulse to manifest Itself, is in no way distinguishable from the Nameless One. It, being a Will that wills nothing, a Power that does nothing, is not cognisable as existent in the Spirit, but still Its existence is undeniable. It is characterized by five negative attributes, viz. Eternity (*Nityatá*), Stainlessness (*Niranjanatá*), Motionlessness (*Nishpandatá*), Unreflectingness (*Nirábhásatá*) and Changelessness (*Nirutthánatá*).

At the second stage there arises within the Power a subtle impulse or tendency (*Unmukhatá*) to unfold Itself,—the Will becomes characterized by an inner urge to realise Its indefinite potentiality. At this stage It is called *Pará-S'akti* (Supreme Power). There being some sort of distinction without difference between the changeless self-luminous Spirit and His Power, *S'akti* exists at this stage *not as S'iva*, but *in Śiva*. The unfoldment of *S'akti* in the form of a tendency or dynamic urge distinguishes It from the transcendent character of *Śiva*. But there is as yet no actual movement or action in *S'akti*. This *Pará-S'akti* also has five qualities, viz. Existence (*Astitá*), Immeasurableness (*Aprameyatá*), Undifferentiatedness (*Abhinnatá*), Infinitude (*Anantatá*), Unmanifestedness (*Avyaktatá*).

At the third stage some internal movement or vibration (*Spandana*) arises in this Creative Will. The Power is then characterised by some internal activity, though not by any outward transformation. It is then called *Apará-S'akti*. *S'akti* is at this stage more clearly distinguishable, though never separable, from Its transcendent Self or Lord, *Śiva*. Its five qualities are described as *Sphurattá*, *Sphárató*, *Sphutatá*, *Sphotatá* and *Sphurtti*. These qualities imply that *S'akti* now moves and has the ground of movement within Itself, that It reveals Itself and shows the power of self-revelation within Its own character, that It is full of enthusiasm for unfolding and enjoying all that is potentially existent in Its nature. *Śiva*, as the sole owner, illuminer, seer, enjoyer and self of this active Will, *appears* somewhat like an active Agent, though He really transcends all kinds of actions.

At the fourth stage a consciousness of Ego or I-ness (*Ahantá*) evolves in this subtly active Will of *Śiva* and *S'akti* is then called *Sukshmá-S'akti*, *Śiva*, as endowed with this *Sukshmá-S'akti*, appears as becoming awakened to the consciousness that He is the sole Creative Spiritual Personality with infinite power for manifesting Himself as diverse orders of existences. Up till now *Śiva* was as it were a pure Supra-personal Spirit, and now He becomes a Personal God. But even at this stage He is not conscious of Himself or of His *S'akti* as having any differentiation into parts (*Amśa*), or as having any temporal or spatial differences (*Antara*) in His existence, or as having any kind of actual movement or self-transformation (*Chalatá*), or as having any kind of doubt or indetermination (*Anischayatá*) in His consciousness, or any process of knowledge involving discrimination between subject and predicate, self and not-self, soul and body (*Vikalpa*). *S'akti* is accordingly described as having the qualities of *Niramśatá*, *Nirantaratá*, *Nischalatá*, *Nischayatá*, and *Nirvikalpatá*. Power is now perceived by *Śiva* as His embodiment, but the body is wholly spiritual and hence identified with Himself. *Śiva* is, even with reference to this stage of *S'akti*, perfectly calm and tranquil, self-illumining and self-enjoying Divine Personality.

At the fifth stage *S'akti* becomes distinctly a knowing, feeling and willing Power (*Vedana-śilá Prakriti*) and is then known as *Kundalini-S'akti*, consciously associated with *Śiva*. At this stage of self-evolution *Śakti* appears as Perfect (*Purná*), Omnipotent (*Pravalá*), Self-transforming (*Prochchalá*), Moving towards creation or self-diversification (*Pratyagmukhá*) and Reflecting in a variety of forms the infinite nature of *Śiva* (*Pratibimbá*). The entire universe, which is called the Cosmic Body of *Śiva* (*Para Pinda*), with all the diversities which should be evolved from *S'akti* in time and space, is *ideally* manifested in the dynamic nature of *Kundalini S'akti* and illumined by the Superconsciousness of *Śiva*. *Śiva* then dwells in an *ideal* universe and becomes, as it were, conscious of Himself as the Substance and the Soul and the Lord of this cosmic system.

In this manner Gorakhnath traces the gradual self-unfoldment of the infinite and eternal dynamic nature of the Absolute Spirit, *Śiva*. As *S'akti* is thus phenomenally manifested, *Śiva* seems to acquire newer and newer attributes, more and more glorified existence, in relation to these manifestations. It is through further and further self-unfoldment, self-diversification and self-objectification of His *S'akti* (*S'akti-chakra-kramena*), that the Cosmic Body (*Mahá-Sákára-Pinda*) of *Śiva* is created. In relation to and as qualified by the aforesaid five stages of internal self-unfoldment of *S'akti*, *Śiva* is spoken of as *Aparamparam*, *Paramapadam*, *Sunyam*, *Niranjanam* and *Paramátmá* respectively. The process is the progressive descent of the Divine Super-Consciousness into more and more manifested forms of His dynamic nature. This may be viewed on the one hand as the gradual self-veiling, self-conditioning and self-limiting of the infinite, eternal, absolute, supra-personal spiritual character of *Śiva*, and on the other hand as the progressive self-expanding, self-glorifying and self-enjoying of Him through revelation of the Power which is eternally innate in His nature.

From *Kundalini S'akti Mahákáśa* evolves, from *Mahákáśa Mahávάyu*, from *Mahávάyu Mahátejas*, thence *Mahásalila*, and thence *Mahápritihwi*. Thus the *Parapinda*, which is also called *Adya* and *Anádi Pinda*, is unfolded into *Mahá-Sákára Pinda*, —the Great Body with the cosmic material form. It is from this Cosmic Body and within it that countless orders of individual bodies (*Vyasti Pinda*) evolve. They all live and move and have their being and becoming in the Cosmic Body of *Śiva*. *Śiva* is the Indwelling Spirit, the Innermost Soul, the Inspiring and Controlling Lord, of every individual body. What are called individual souls (*Jivátmá*) are conscious self-manifestations of *Śiva* in individual psycho-physical bodies, and they are phenomenally conditioned by the characteristics and limitations of these bodies. It is the One Supreme Universal Soul that manifests Itself as innumerable individual souls dwelling in and exercising ownership upon diverse orders of bodies.

All individual existences are pervaded by the existence, power, vitality and consciousness of *Śiva.*

The fully developed psycho-physiological organism of *man* is the culmination of the course of natural evolution in the cosmic body of *Śiva.* It is in such an individual body (*Vyasti Pinda*) that the entire Cosmic Body (*Samasti Pinda,—Brahmánda*) is distinctly mirrored, and the self-conscious individual soul conditioned by such an organism is capable of knowing and experiencing and enjoying the whole universe within this body through proper self-discipline. The microcosm is an epitome of the macrocosm and can be realised as such. When this is realised, then only can it be said that the true knowledge of the body (*Pinda-Sambitti*) has been attained. This is a remarkable feature of the philosophy and religion of Gorakhnath that not only the individual soul has to be realised as identical with the Universal Soul or the Supreme Spirit, but the individual body also has to be realised as identical with the Cosmic Body of the Spirit. When the sense of difference (born of Ignorance) between the individual body and the Cosmic Body as well as that between the individual soul and the Universal Soul vanishes, and the same *Śiva* with His *S'akti* is experienced everywhere, there is what is called *Samarasakarana*, *i.e.* the realisation of perfect harmony and unity and beauty of all existence.

When a truth-seeker ascends to the highest plane of spiritual experience, he attains perfect knowledge of *Sámaraśya* (spiritual unity of all existences). He transcends the difference between matter (*jada*) and spirit (*chit*), body (*deha, pinda*) and soul (*átmá, pada*), finite (*sánta*) and infinite (*ananta*), transitory (*anitya*) and eternal (*nitya*), changing (*parinámi*) and changeless (*aparinámi*), plurality (*vahutwa*) and unity (*ekatwa*). He sees the Spirit in matter, the Soul in the body, the Infinite in the finite, the Eternal Changeless One in all temporary changing relative plurality. He even transcends the moral distinctions between right and wrong, good and evil, virtue and vice. He sees everything as good and beautiful, as what it ought to be, being

a form of self-expression of the perfectly good and beautiful One. He dwells above the planes of individualism, communalism, nationalism and even internationalism. He belongs to no *Varna*, no *A'śrama*, no *Sampradáya*, no *Játi*. He cannot have any sectarian bias or prejudice in him. He lives and moves and has his being in the Supreme Spirit, *Śiva*, Whom he sees manifested in himself and all the objects of his phenomenal experience. In his practical life he appears as an embodiment of universal love and sympathy and compassion, perfectly calm and tranquil and sweet, perfectly free from all cares and anxieties and sorrows and despondencies under all external circumstances. Life and death, honour and insult, rich garment and nakedness, spring and summer and winter, are all the same to him. His adjustment with nature is perfect. He may be regarded as a perfect conqueror of nature or as in perfect conjugal union with nature. He truly enjoys the world.

In the treatises of Gorakhnath and of all *yogi* teachers such a perfectly enlightened person is called *Avadhuta*. He is also spoken of as *Nátha*. He is described as *Mahá-Jnáni*, *Mahá-Yogi*, *Mahá-Siddha*. He is identified with *Śiva*. He is *Śiva* and man at the same time,—he is *Śiva* realised in human body. It is such *S'iva-men* or *human-S'ivas* who practically act as *Gurus* in the human society. They are living embodiments of the spiritual Ideal, which man can realise by dint of systematic endeavours and for the realisation of which man is born. *Śiva* manifests Himself as *Guru* in and through them, and *Siddhi* depends chiefly on His Grace.

The systematic course of physical, vital, psychical, intellectual, moral and spiritual discipline, which is necessary for the realisation of the supreme Ideal, the attainment of the *Avadhuta* stage and spiritualisation of the whole outlook and existence, is called *Yoga*. It has already been noted that nobody has been able to ascertain historically how old the *Yoga* system is in India. The science and art of *Yoga* has been in vogue in India since the pre-historic times. Maharshi Patanjali's *Yoga-Sutra* is perhaps the earliest systematic treatment

of the science and art and philosophy of *Yoga*, that is available now. But there is no doubt about the fact that *Yoga* had been practised and taught long long before Patanjali's time. There are numerous other treatises on *Yoga*, relatively old and recent. The *Yoga* system is based on a wonderfully thorough knowledge of the bewilderingly complex bodily and psychical organism of man, of the various layers of human consciousness, and of man's moral, social and spiritual nature. It has discovered the means for bringing the whole complex nature of man under the complete control of his enlightened will, raising it above subjection to the generally known physical and biological laws, harmonising and unifying all its aspects under the governance of one supreme dynamic Ideal, and practically spiritualising and illumining the entire nature. It has found out the secret of elevating *Jiva* into *S'ivahood*.

Gorakhnath and his school adopted the *Yoga* system practised and taught by older Maháyogis and made many contributions to it. They wrote many books on the system. They introduced many *tántric* elements into it, which are not found in the teachings of the older masters. They greatly developed the *Hatha-Yoga* and the *Mantra-Yoga* aspects of the system, and exhibited many potential powers hidden in human nature by making them kinetic. They became particularly famous among common people on account of their superhuman and supernatural powers, along with their spiritual enlightenment and perfectly care-free and tranquil life.

The science and art of *Hatha-Yoga* was immensely elaborated by Gorakhnath and his followers. His *sampradáya* is, therefore, generally known as *Hatha-Yogi Sampradáya*. *Hatha-Yoga* chiefly consists in a well-planned course of psycho-physiological discipline for the attainment of perfect mastery over the physical body, the nervous system, the sense-organs, the vital forces and the psychic tendencies and instincts. This discipline for self-mastery is attended at different stages with the development of various powers, such as those for seeing past and future events, perceiving very remote and very subtle things, reading the

thoughts and feelings of others, entering into the bodies of other men or animals, assuming many bodies at thes ame time, going to distant places merely by force of will in the twinkling of an eye, converting one material thing into another, hypnotizing people, performing miraculous deeds, and so on and so forth. These are called *Siddhis* (incidental successes) or occult powers. Diverse kinds of subtle sounds are heard within the body, when the mind is withdrawn from outer objects. Many *yogis* of this school have demonstrated such powers in their life, and proved the truth of the assertions of the *Yoga-S'ástras*. But all the authoritative treatises on *Hatha-Yoga* as well as all the *Gurus* of this sect repeatedly proclaim that *Hatha-Yoga* should never be practised merely or chiefly for the attainment of these occult powers, and that it is always to be practised as a preliminary course to *Rája-Yoga*. Powers which are developed through *Hatha-Yoga* should always be kept under control and ordinarily concealed from the view of others. Control over the *yogic* powers requires greater power of self-control. All the powers which are acquired should be conserved and concentrated upon the realisation of the Supreme Spirit and attainment of the state of *Avadhuta* or *Nátha*. *Hatha-Yoga-Pradipika* begins with the word of caution,—*Kevalam Rája-yogáya Hatha-Vidyá upadiśyate,*—*Hatha-Vidyá* is going to be taught only for the sake of *Rája-Yoga*, which is meant for the perfect spiritual illumination of the whole being of man through the most intensive practice of the deepest reflection, concentration, meditation and *samádhi* on the transcendent and all-pervading character of *Śiva*, the Absolute Spirit.

Yoga has from time immemorial been expounded as consisting of eight principal methods organically related to one another so as to constitute one system and is therefore known as *Astángika Márga* (One Path with eight limbs). The eight methods are,—*Yama*, *Niyama*, *A'sana*, *Pránáyáma*, *Pratyáhára*, *Dháraná*, *Dhyána*, *Samádhi*. *Yama* and *Niyama* are universal codes of moral conduct, which ought to be followed by all, whether adopting the *Yoga* Path or not. The *Nátha-Yogi*

school, though emphasising their absolute necessity as preliminary discipline for the practice of *Yoga*, does not always recognise them as essential limbs of *Yoga*. *Yoga* proper is accordingly spoken of as *Shad-anga* (having six limbs). Patanjali enumerates five forms of *Yama* and five forms of *Niyama*, while the *Náth-Yogi* teachers enumerate ten forms of each. The ten forms of *Yama* are, —*Ahimsá* (Non-violence), *Satya* (Truthfulness), *Asteya* (Non-stealing), *Brahmacharyya* (Control over sexual propensities), *Kshamá* (Forgiveness), *Dhriti* (Patience), *Dayá* (Compassion), *A'rjava* (Simplicity), *Mitáhara* (Regulated diet) and *S'aucha* (Cleanliness). Each of them has to be practised in mind, speech and action,—in external conduct as well as in thought, feeling and will. The ten forms of *Niyama* are,—*Tapas* (Austerity), *Santosha* (Contentment), *A'stikya* (Faith), *Dána* (Charity), *Iśwara-Pujana* (Worship of God), *Siddhánta-S'ravana* (Hearing of spiritual truths from reliable teachers), *Hree* (Modesty), *Mati* (Reflection), *Japa* (Muttering Divine Name), *Huta* (Offering articles to the Gods). All these are to be carefully practised for the elevation of character, ennoblement of conduct, refinement of thoughts, feelings and desires, acquirement of self-control and self-confidence, and attainment of physical and mental fitness for higher *yogic* culture. *Yama* and *Niyama* have by continuous practice to be converted into normal nature by every spiritual aspirant. They should not be neglected even in the higher stages of *Yoga*. Many earnest aspirants are known to have fallen from higher planes of *yogic* attainments into the lowest depth of moral and spiritual degradation on account of their negligence of *Yama* and *Niyama*. They are to be remembered as *Sárvabhouma-Mahábrata*, *i.e.* great disciplines necessary in all planes of life's progress.

Patanjali, being chiefly concerned with *Dháraná*, *Dhyána* and *Samádhi*, has very briefly disposed of *A'sana* and *Pránáyáma*. The treatises of the *Nátha-Yogis* have imparted elaborate instructions on various kinds of *A'sana* and *Pránáyáma*, and have also taught various forms of *Mudrá*, *Bandha*, *Bedha* and *Kriyá*-

yoga. They are not all essentially necessary for ascending to the higher planes of spiritual enlightenment and the attainment of union with *Śiva.* But they have their special efficacies for the awakenment and development of the great powers latent in man. By practising them a man can bring all the organs of the body, external as well as internal, under his perfect control, can turn the muscles and limbs regarded as involuntary into voluntary, can acquire various kinds of supernormal powers and super-normal knowledge. He can become a master of many of the natural forces to which he normally thinks himself a slave. These processes are also of great help in the practice of the deepest concentration of the whole mental energy upon the Supreme Truth and the absorption of the whole consciousness with the Truth.

There is no space here to give even the faintest idea of these intricate processes of body-control and mind-control and nature-control and power-awakenment, in which the *yogis* of Gorakhnath's *sampradáya* specialised and in respect of which they made the most valuable contributions to the Indian culture. Earnest students may form ideas about them from the study of the books dealing with them and may be astonished to find what undreamt-of capacities lie hidden in man and what treasures unexplored by modern science and psychology remain concealed in the human nature. But the practice of these processes without expert guidance, merely on the strength of book-knowledge, has its dangers and may not bear the desirable fruits. The *Hatha-Vidyá* is preserved by the teachers as *gupta-vidyá* (secret knowledge) and has to be learnt by worthy students from competent *Gurus*. *Hatha-Yoga,* systematically practised, can revolutionise the entire nature of man and can enable man to realise that he can be a perfect master of nature in the true sense.

Having acquired sufficient strength for exercising control over the bodily system, the vital organs, the sensuous appetites, the mental propensities and the intellectual curiosities and doubts, the spiritual aspirant should practise deeper and deeper

concentration with a view to the perfect illumination of consciousness. *Pratyáhára*, *Dháraná*, *Dhyána* and *Samádhi* are the progressive stages of concentration. *Pratyáhára* is the process of withdrawing attention from all kinds of distracting objects, whether external or internal, whether objects of sense-perception or objects of mental thoughts, desires and emotions,—including even the objects of the *yogic* knowledge and powers, which also create obstacles in the path of concentration. It requires indomitable strength of determination, a spirit of fighting with the normal nature, and great patience and perseverance. Along with the continuous effort for *Pratyáhára*, *Dháraná* should be practised, which is the positive process of fixing the attention upon some definite object,—some one chosen sound or *mantra*, or some one visible thing or symbol or image, or some one mental concept, or some idea of void or stillness, or the most calm and tranquil state of consciousness, or some preconceived notion of the Supreme Ideal. With progress in *Pratyáhára* and *Dháraná*, the object chosen for *Dháraná* should be progressively subtler and subtler, more and more refined, more and more spiritual, and there should be less and less conscious effort for *Pratyáhára*. When *Pratyáhára* becomes easy and *Dháraná* steady and refined, when consciousness becomes relatively free from the distracting tendencies and learns to remain fixed upon the Truth, *Dháraná* is developed into *Dhyána*. As the capacity for *Dhyána* or deep meditation develops, a *yoga-sádhaka* ought to be particularly cautious to free his consciousness from all preconceived notions about the Ultimate Truth, from all sectarian bias or prejudice; he should know that the Supreme Truth is not an Object of intellectual speculation or reflection, that It is above or behind thought and speech, that It is self-revealing and lies hidden in the innermost depth of his consciousness, that It is the Soul of his empirical consciousness, and not its object. Consciousness, becoming through previous practices perfectly pure and tranquil and steady, should open itself to the Truth to be illumined by Its Divine Light.

As a sincere and earnest truth-seeker advances in the practice

of deep concentration and meditation with an unprejudiced and unattached mind, the doors of the inner and inner chambers of consciousness, which remain closed to the normal mind, are opened to him, he gets experience of the deeper and deeper secrets of human consciousness, the spiritual and blissful character of consciousness is more and more brilliantly unveiled to him, the empirical consciousness is gradually illumined by and united with the Transcendent Consciousness, and consciousness is elevated to the state of Superconsciousness. This state of Superconsciousness, the state of the union of empirical consciousness with the infinite, eternal, changeless Transcendent Consciousness, or what may be called the union of the mind with the Soul, or of *Jivátmá* with *Paramátmá* or of *Jiva* with *S'iva*, is known as the state of *Samádhi*. *Samádhi* is not a static state, not a state of unconsciousness, not a state similar to sound sleep or swoon, as it outwardly appears to be. It is the most calm and tranquil state of consciousness, and at the same time most dynamic, most illumined, most joyful. It is a state of perfect activity as well as perfect rest or effortlessness, a state of perfect joyfulness as well as perfect emotionlessness, a state of perfect knowledge as well as a state without any process of knowledge, without any subject-object distinction. It is a state in which a *yogi* enjoys the bliss of immortality in the mortal body, experiences infinity and eternity in the finite and changing body. He becomes one with *Śiva*. The knowledge and power which were so long veiled in him as an individual become fully unveiled and unified. When this state of *Samádhi* is attained, it does not at once become stable and perfect. The empirical consciousness is again and again dissociated from the Transcendent Consciousness, the worldly forces draw it outward and downward, the suppressed tendencies of the mind seek to assert themselves. Prolonged practice is necessary to stabilise and perfect the state of *Samádhi*, as well as to illumine the outer layers of consciousness with the Divine Light obtained in that state. Until and unless the intellectual, mental, vital and physical planes of empirical consciousness

are enlightened by *Samádhija-Prajná*, a *yogi* cannot be said to have attained perfection. The whole being of a *yogi* has to be spiritualised. This requires long practice. *Samádhi* also has various stages, which have to be passed through for perfection.

Among the various forms of esoteric *yoga-sádhaná* taught by Gorakhnath and the *Náth-Yogi* teachers, some special importance is attached to *Chakra-Bheda* and *Náda-anusandhána*. Of these *Chakra-Bheda* (piercing through the *chakras* within the body) is too technical for the uninitiated even to form an idea of it. Superficially speaking, *Chakras* may be said to be the principal nerve-centres within the spinal cord, in which there are subtle lotus-like wheels. From the lowest extremity of the column up to the foot of the cerebrum, generally six such *chakras* are enumerated. The number sometimes varies. Above them all, in the cerebral centre the highest *chakra* is conceived as of the nature of a wheel with a thousand spokes (*Sahasrára*) or a thousand-petalled lotus. All these *chakras* and *padmas* are conceived as corresponding to planes of empirical consciousness as well as vital energy. By means of appropriate *yogic* methods the vital energy as well as the empirical consciousness has to pierce through all the six *chakras*, has to turn upward the normally downward faces of the lotus-petals, has to steadily ascend to higher and higher planes and shake off the bondages of the lower planes, till the highest plane (*Sahasrára*),—the plane of perfect enlightenment, perfect power and perfect bliss—is attained. The Power which was coiled in the *Kundalini S'akti* in the lowest plane of *Muládhára Chakra* becomes gradually uncoiled and dynamic and self-revealing in the higher planes, and in the highest plane the *S'akti* is perfectly free and is realised as in the most blissful embrace with *S'iva*. Thus the highest *chakra* is the supreme ideal plane of empirical consciousness, in which consciousness rises to the state of Superconsciousness and enjoys within itself the absolute union of *S'iva-S'akti*,—the oneness of Supreme Power with Supreme Spirit. When through steady practice

the consciousness in the normal planes also (*i.e.* in the lower *chakras*) is illumined by the transcendental experience of the superconscious state, the entire outlook is transformed and spiritualised, and *S'iva-S'akti Union* is experienced in every phenomenon of the cosmic order.

Nádánusandhána is a comparatively simpler process of *Yoga.* This is prescribed for the *sádhakas* in general. The monotonous sound of *Om* (*Pranava*) is universaly recognised in all the systems of *sádhaná* in India as the unparalleled sound-symbol or name for the Supreme Spirit, by whatever other names He may be designated in the different systems. *Om* is regarded as the First Sound, the one undifferentiated Sound, the Source of all other sounds and words, the Source of the Vedas. It is conceived as the music of the heart of the universe as well as the music of the heart of man. It is *Anáhata-Náda*, *i.e.* Sound not produced from any kind of stroke, from any kind of friction, and not divided into parts. It is one whole. Now, if any objective symbol is necessary for the spiritual aspirant to indicate the Absolute Reality,—and it is generally found to be necessary,—this *Om* is the most appropriate and suitable symbol. The *yogi* teachers advise the *sádhaka* to adopt this elementary sound and to concentrate his attention more and more deeply towards the inner and inner core of it (*Anusandhána*). It will involve the process of *Pratyáhára*, *i.e.* the withdrawal of the senses and the mind from all other sounds and sense-objects and mind-objects, as well as the process of *Dháraná*, *i.e.* the fixing of consciousness steadily upon the monotonous sound as indicative of the Supreme Spirit. The vowel which is necessary only for starting the sound should gradually be dropped, and attention fixed purely upon the continuous nasal sound. The attention should be withdrawn from outside, and the sound should be listened to within. Within the body also various kinds of mysterious sounds are heard; they are pleasant and attractive; but these should be transcended. Gradually the Sound should be subtler and subtler, more and more absorbing, more and more identified with consciousness.

Ultimately the Sound and the Consciousness should become one, and there should be no subject-object distinction within the blissful Consciousness. The Consciousness should thereafter steadily rise to the plane of Superconsciousness and become one with *Śiva*,—the Supreme Spirit.

Gorakhnath and the illustrious saints of his *sampradáya*, while making remarkable contributions to *Yoga-sádhaná* and *Jnána-sádhaná* of this Holy Land for so many centuries, never discouraged or looked down upon the popular *Bhakti-sádhaná* and *Karma-sádhaná* prevalent in the society. They never decried the devotional and ceremonial worship of Gods and Goddesses, of Divine Avatáras and Divinised Saints and Heroes. They never spoke disparagingly about noble and pious actions and works of public utility. But they exercised their spiritual influence in developing the spiritual outlook of the people in general and in teaching them to perform all kinds of work and all forms of worship with the supreme spiritual ideal in view. They instructed the worshippers to see the same Supreme Spirit (*Paramátmá*) in all Gods and Goddesses, in all *Avatáras* and Saints and Heroes, in all Images and Symbols. They taught the devotees to remember that the same nameless and formless, infinite and eternal, Absolute Spirit assumes finite and particular names and forms in order to be easily comprehensible to the finite and imperfect human minds, to attract them and rouse their admiration and reverence through the exhibition of various Divine glories in and through these particularised self-expressions of Himself. He wants them to purify and enlighten and spiritualise themselves through the worship of these Divine embodiments and to attain fitness for ascending to the plane of His transcendent nature. To form the habit of seeing the One Spirit as the Soul of all these names and forms is, according to them, most essential for spiritual enlightenment and liberation from bondage. Works also have great spiritual value, if they are performed with a sincere and earnest spirit of worship to the Supreme Lord dwelling as the Soul in all men and all living beings. The practice of *Yama* and

Niyama is of course necessary for all workers and worshippers. They do not preach that monastic life is inevitably necessary for the attainment of spiritual perfection. In fact, there have been many *yogis* of the highest order among householders in all ages. Inner renunciation is much more essential than outer renunciation. Non-attachment to worldly things and earnest urge for the spiritual Ideal, whether in family life or in forest life, are the basic need.

A humble attempt has been made to give here a general outline of the philosophy and religion of Gorakhnath and his *sampradáya* by way of introduction to the short biography of Yogiraj Gambhirnath, who was universally respected as a perfect representative of the *sádhaná* and *siddhi*, of this *sampradáya* in the present age. Having by a long course of systematic *Yoga-sádhaná* reached the highest summit of *Yoga* and *Jnána* and attained the supreme *Avadhuta* state, he lived a wonderfully normal life of universal love and service during the later period of his physical existence. Many of his contemporary saints, who had deep insight into the inner nature of a *Maháyogi*, testified that the *yogic* powers which he had acquired were unlimited, that his *yogic* knowledge was boundless, that he had attained perfect mastery over himself as well as over the forces of nature, that inwardly he was in continuous communion with the Absolute Spirit, and that he was an embodiment of *Śiva* in human form. But in his practical life he kept his supernatural powers and knowledge under such perfect control that they would seldom find any outer expression. What was most noticeable in his normal way of life was his perfect calmness and tranquillity, his absolutely care-free and joyful look, the constant inwardness of his eyes, the continuous meditative flow of his consciousness, in the midst of all kinds of outer circumstances. He seemed to be always in a superconscious state, though in bodily touch with the affairs of the sensible world. He always seemed to be living inwardly in the supra-mundane plane and at the same time moving and acting in the mundane region. He appeared to be seeing the same one non-dual Spirit in all,

and at the same time behaving with different men and creatures in accordance with worldly laws. Though living in the world of diversities, he always appeared to dwell above this world in some far-off realm of absolute unity and peace and bliss. In this world every man and every creature felt his love and compassion and also felt the presence of a super personality. His biography would mean a humble attempt to give a mere glimpse of the outer life of this extraordinary *yogi*, whose inner life was really beyond our approach.



YOGIRĀJ GAMBHIRNATH

CHAPTER I

THE FIRST APPEARANCE AT THE GORAKHPUR MATH

Yogiráj Gambhirnath renounced the world and adopted the life of an ascetic, when in the full bloom of his youth. His renunciation, even in its outer aspect, had since been so complete, that he would never afterwards speak of or refer to his abandoned name or parentage or birth-place or caste or any event of his early life. He took the name and appellation which his *Guru* (spiritual guide) had conferred on him and devoted himself to the *sádhaná* (spiritual practice) into which the Guru had initiated him. He appears to have made up his mind to remove even from his memory all traces of his domestic and social connections which he had renounced and to become a completely new man in the new world into which he got a new birth from his spiritual father. Whenever any admirer happened to put to him any question about his antecedents, he would gently remind him of the futility of such curiosity, saying "*Prapancha-se kyá hogá*" (what will you gain from knowledge and discussion of such worldly matters) ? On account of his absolute reticence with regard to the facts of his past life and our inability to find out any reliable persons with first-hand knowledge about that period, his pre-ascetic life has remained practically unknown to his disciples and admirers.

On the authority of some very old *sádhus* (ascetics) of the great monastery of Gorakhpur, where Gambhirnath found his Guru and was initiated into *yoga* and asceticism, it could be ascertained that he hailed from some village in the Kashmere state. The *sádhus*, who were present in the monastery when Gambhirnath arrived there, about the middle of the nineteenth

century, were very highly impressed and attracted, as they said, by his majestic appearance, noble demeanour, sweet and modest behaviour, coolness of temperament with warmth of heart, taciturnity in speech with readiness to serve, indifference to all outward happenings with intense yearning for spiritual advancement. He appeared to them to have come out from a wealthy family of high social status, and the *sádhus* wondered why such a cultured and promising young man with such resources for comfortable living should get sick of the world and think of turning into a mendicant. Even at that time he was reluctant to utter a single word about who and what he had been and what had led him to renounce his worldly prospects and enjoyments. All sorts of questions were put to him by the *sádhus*, but they could not prevail upon him to break his silence on these points. He mixed little with the *sádhus* in general. His sole concern was with the saint, Bábá Gopalnath, the then *Mohunt* or head of the monastery, whom he accepted as the Guru and from whom he sought instruction for dedicating his whole life and energy to the practice of *yoga*.

The *sádhus* could, however, gather that the new aspirant for *yogo* had by nature a deeply religious temperament and an other-worldly disposition, that even in his early youth money and women and social distinction had no attraction for him, and that he was somehow fully convinced that such objects of transitory interests could not satisfy the essential needs of the human soul and give man permanent happiness. He became averse to everything upon which men in general relied for enjoyment in life. He found no peace in the world in which he lived. The social atmosphere of enjoyment and ambition, competition and self-aggrandisement, mutual jealousy and hatred became unbearable to him. Everyone around him appeared to be unhappy, though everyone was seeking for happiness. He began to think deeply within himself as to the best and most effective means of attaining

permanent happiness and perfect calmness of mind. He was not a learned man. He had no English education, his learning in Sanskrit also was not wide enough for his seeking the solution of his problems in abstruse scriptural literature. Whatever acquaintance he formed with the thoughts and experiences and lives of the sages and saints of the ancient and medieval and modern times was mainly through his mother tongue. He was, however, a man of extraordinarily sound and keen commonsense, and he had an immeasurable store of spiritual wisdom hidden in his inner heart. As the result of his deep thinking he was led to the conclusion that renunciation of the world and adoption of the life of *sannyasa* and *yoga* was the only means for attaining the permanent bliss and tranquillity which his soul sought after.

At the stage when Gambhirnath's youthful mind was being puzzled by this great riddle of life, he is said to have fortunately come in contact with a saint of the *Náth-yogi* sect, who happened in course of his habitual wandering to arrive at a place near to his native village and to sojourn on a certain cremation ground. Hearing of the presence of a saint within a short distance from himself, the young boy felt an inner urge to see him and enjoy his holy company. He appeared before him and sought for enlightenment with regard to his problem. The calm and grave *yogi* and the young and earnest truth-seeker felt deeply attracted towards each other. The aspirant for *yoga* seemed to have got some new light from the *yogi*. He gave daily attendance to the *yogi* for about one month. As the result of this intimate association, the former was fully converted to the latter's way of thinking. It is from this *yogi* that the would-be Gambhirnath is said to have got first-hand information about the *Náth-yogi* sect, its Gorakhpur centre, the celebrated Gorakhnath Temple and the monastery attached to it, its great *Mohunt* Bábá Gopalnath as well as the fundamental doctrines of yoga. The path now became clear to the truth-seeker. Soon after this, he abruptly and silently cut off

all connections with his family and society, and started for Gorakhpur.

So much could be gathered by the *sádhus* by linking together what happened to slip now and then from his cautious and disciplined lips and by drawing inferences from his manners and actions. At the time of his first appearance at the Gorakhnath Temple of Gorakhpur, he is said to have been dressed like a 'Babu' (a cultured Indian gentleman). He put on silken clothes. He used to shave his beard, but preserve his moustache. He had a fair and bright complexion and a tall and robust physique. His grave, gentle, dignified and well-balanced manners were worthy of a man of high position. His appearance would have, as the *sádhus* said, attracted the notice of any casual onlooker, even if he had tried to hide himself in the midst of a crowd of hundreds of people. He is said to have brought with him a pretty good amount of money. Some portion of the amount he distributed among the *sádhus* and the poor hungry people, and the rest he handed over to his *Guru*, Bábá Gopalnath. Charity seemed to have been ingrained in his nature.

Soon after his arrival at the *áśram*, the *Mohunt* Bábá Gopalnathji, who was not only the head of the monastery, but was also reputed to be a great *yogi* with deep spiritual insight, formally initiated him into *yoga* and made him a full-fledged *sádhu*. His *Babu-hood* completely disappeared, and he became altogether a new man with a new name, with nothing but a *Kaupin* (loin-cloth) on.

CHAPTER II

INITIATION AND PREPARATION FOR YOGA SADHANA

The new initiate obtained from his Guru the name 'Gambhirnath', which was perfectly appropriate to his character and conduct. The name implies that he was a master (*nátha*) of gravity (*gámbhirya*). He was by natural disposition extraordinarily grave,—grave in appearance, grave in bearing, grave in speech, grave in the mode of thought, grave in the play of emotions. Nobody ever found him in a fit of temper or in an agitated mood ; nobody ever heard him talking loudly or swiftly; nobody ever noticed any indication of sadness or mournfulness on his face ; nobody ever saw him burst into a loud laughter. A feeble ray of smile almost always radiated from his sharp and steady eyes and lips, but at the same time there was an unmistakable sign of strong inner determination visible on them. He belonged to that type of men who were not to be contented with living the life of a mediocre or doing any duty half-heartedly. When once the pursuit of any ideal was finally decided upon, the entire energy must be concentrated upon it and there could be no rest or peace till the goal was reached.

This was the character of the young gentleman who offered himself to Bábá Gopalnath for being guided on to the ultimate spiritual goal of human life. Gopalnathji, a saint of deep insight that he was, must have thought himself particularly fortunate in having as his disciple a young man of such extraordinary potentiality and promise, and must have entertained the high hope that the exemplary spiritual practices and attainments of this young man would in future shed an uncommon lustre and exert a dynamic influence upon the moral and religious atmosphere, not only of the great monastic order to

which he belonged, but also of entire Hindusthan, the land of spiritual culture.

He cordially received the young truth-seeker, took the responsibility of guiding him in the path of truth-realisation and set about moulding his character and shaping his conduct according to the best traditions of the great *yogi* sect. But the *Guru* soon discovered that the disciple did not require much direct help and guidance from him, inasmuch as his body, mind and soul were already adequately prepared for the esoteric practices of the higher planes of *yoga*. It appeared that the veil of ignorance which concealed the face of Truth from his phenomenal consciousness was so thin that it could be torn asunder without much effort on his part for any length of time.

According to the scriptures and *yogic* traditions, *yama* and *niyama* are the bases of *yoga*. *Yama* primarily consists in *ahimsa* (non-violence), *satya* (truthfulness), *asteya* (non-stealing), *brahmacharya* (control of sexual appetite) and *aparigraha* (control of the desire to save any property or take from anybody more than what one requires for the continuity of physical existence). Non-violence implies regulation of thought, word and deed with due respect for the lives and feelings and susceptibilities of all creatures. Its fulfilment lies in love and service to all living beings. Truthfulness not only implies perfect sincerity in thought, speech and action, but it also implies the regulation of all these with an earnest search for what is truly real, good and beautiful. It demands a whole-hearted effort to know what is true and to give expression in speech as well as in action to what is definitely known or sincerely believed to be true. Non-stealing demands that one should not even look upon or think of any kind of property or possession of another with a feeling of greed or envy. *Brahmacharya* requires such a discipline of the body and the mind that not only should there be the absence of any form of sexual intercourse with any person of the opposite sex and of any downward movement of the sexual energy, but also there should be in

its higher stages of progress the absence of any mental hankering for the pleasure of such intercourse and the absence of the thought of any member of a different sex as an object of enjoyment. *Aparigraha* consists in the habit of not taking anything in excess of what is barely needed for self-preservation, and not storing up anything as one's own for future use. This, therefore, further implies the distribution of what one possesses and obtains in excess of one's bare needs of life for the removal of the wants of others. Thus each of the five forms of *Yama* has its negative as well as positive aspect, its physical as well as mental aspect.

Niyama is similarly expounded as primarily consisting in *śaucha* (cleanliness of the body and the mind), *santoṣa* (contentment with the circumstances one is placed in and the consequent calmness and tranquillity of the mind), *swádháya* (well-regulated study of the scriptures and books inspiring the mind with high spiritual ideals and also systematic listening to the instructive discourses given by the *Guru* and other learned and experienced superiors), *tapas* (the practice of bearing with fortitude and equanimity the changing external circumstances such as heat and cold and rain, full-meal and half-meal and starvation, honour and insult and indifference, crowded environments and solitary confinements etc.), and *Iśwara-pranidhána* (the practice of worshipping and meditating on God and of performing duties in the spirit of service to God). The conceptions of God may vary. *Iśwara-pranidhána* may sometimes take the form of the worship of gods and goddesses and contemplation of their ideal moral and spiritual powers and qualities. Sometimes it may take the form of the worship and service of *Guru*. In whatever form it may be practised, it is always effective in purifying the body and the mind, in destroying the vanity and the worldward bent of the mind and developing a spirit of humility and a Godward tendency.

Without the practice of and a sufficient degree of progress in *yama* and *niyama*, there cannot be whole-hearted devotion

to the practice of the esoteric aspects of *yoga*. If an aspirant, neglecting these essential preliminaries, temporarily suppresses the distracting immoral propensities by the power of determination, and endeavours to advance in the culture of breath-control, contemplation, meditation etc., he may, if he is a man of strong will, attain apparent success; but the effect is not likely to be permanent, and in some cases the way to further progress becomes blocked by the sudden commotion and revolt of the artificially restrained bodily and mental impulses. *Yama* and *niyama* constitute systematic moral culture, and it is a fundamental principle of spiritual *sádhaná* that the formation of a pure, noble, lofty and strong moral character must be the secure ground on which religious discipline in its higher aspects should stand. *Yama* and *niyama* are described in the scriptures as *Sárbabhouma Mahábrata*—the great discipline of universal necessity in all stages of human life. Even those who feel no inner craving for the realisation of the highest good of life, and therefore feel no necessity for the higher forms of religious discipline, ought, as self-conscious and self-determining human beings, to cultivate the cardinal moral virtues indicated by *yama* and *niyama*. These are of prime necessity for those who seek for higher spiritual life.

It is accordingly the primary concern of a true and experienced spiritual guide to prepare the body and the mind of the disciple for higher spiritual practices by subjecting him to strict moral discipline, *i.e.* the cultivation of *yama* and *niyama*. Bábá Gopalnath also kept his new favourite disciple by his side in the *áśram* to give him suitable preliminary training. But it was soon discovered that those cardinal virtues were almost natural with him. The young *sádhu* Gambhirnath had by nature a well-formed body, a well-disciplined mind and a well-developed character. He appeared to be constitutionally incapable of being violent in speech and action and of wilfully inflicting pain even upon any small sensitive creature. His heart was overflowing with love for all. He

wanted to be of some service to all around him, but did not like to receive services from others. It is the pursuit of truth that brought him here from the distant out-of-the-way village of Kashmere. He never felt any greed of wealth and yearning for sexual pleasure. He burnt out even the seeds of his worldly tendencies by the fire of his intense yearning for truth-realisation. Having made over the money he had to the *Guru*, he became free from the bondage of ownership. He now depended for his existence entirely upon the mercy of the *Guru* or the Deity. His unperturbed calmness and quietude in the midst of all kinds of external circumstances was his most predominant virtue. His body was also suited for the endurance of all sorts of hardship. He was found always contented with whatever conditions he was placed in.

His faith in and devotion to God were remarkable, and he learnt to worship God in various names and forms with unquestioning faith and unperturbed devotion.. Though he had not much book-learning, his intelligence and commonsense were of an extraordinarily high order, and he could very easily pick up what he required to learn from what he heard and read and experienced. He used to listen most submissively to the courses of instruction given by the *Guru* and the elderly *sádhus*, and also to hear the discourses which the *sádhus* held on *sástric* topics. By the exercise of his sound commonsense he could wonderfully solve many complicated problems which puzzled the brains of the learned *pundits* and find out excellent formulas for the reconciliation of many conflicting view-points which often became a source of disquietude among the rival advocates. Though he intervened very rarely in times of heated discussions, whenever he broke his silence and put in a word or two, all were impressed by his decision, and they wondered how a young man without wide and deep acquaintance with the *sástras* could so clearly grasp the question and so easily point out the solution.

Gambhirnath's moral virtues, the excellent qualities of his

head and heart, and his acute yearning for truth-realisation and liberation soon convinced the *Guru* that he should not be made to spend much time in the preparatory *sádhaná* in the *áśram* under his direct guidance. He was already fit for being engaged in the practice of the higher stages of *yoga*. He himself also was very eager to go away from the crowded monastery and the distracting company of the outward-minded mendicants who utilised a very small portion of the day and the night in spiritual self-discipline, and spent a far greater portion in idleness and useless talks and movements. But his devotion to the *Guru* kept him there and he made no complaint about it.

While in the *áśram*, he received an all-round training in monastic life. His principal business here was service to the *Guru*, which was universally regarded as one of the most essential elements of self-discipline in the first stages of spiritual *sádhaná*. In order that he might gain first-hand experience in all the departments of the *áśram*-management, the *Guru* appointed him in different responsible posts in the monastery and trained him in the proper discharge of the duties pertaining to them. These duties were of such a nature as to develop in the mind of the young *sádhaka* a spirit of devoted worship (*bhakti*) as well as a spirit of selfless service (*sevá*).

With this end in view, the *Guru* appointed him for a certain period as the *pujári* (worshipper or priest) and placed him in charge of the ceremonial worship of the presiding Deity of the *áśram*. This, it should be remembered, was not an easy task. The *pujá* in the Gorakhnath Temple goes on at short intervals almost throughout the day and the night. There is no Divine Image in the Temple. The principal Deity Who is worshipped there is generally spoken of as *Náthji* (the Master), the Supreme Lord of the universe and the eternally realised Ideal of the *yogis*. The *pujá* is offered at the altar, on which the living presence of the omnipotent and omniscient, infinite and eternal, all-loving and all-merciful Lord of all the world is felt by every believing heart.

All *yogis* worship Him as the Supreme Person in Whom the highest Ideal of *yoga*—the absolute Truth, Goodness and Beauty and Bliss—is perfectly realised and enjoyed and Who is the eternal and universal *Guru*, inspiring and guiding and blessing all sincere seekers of the Ideal from within as well as through the agency of human *gurus*. He is the Lord of all lords, the Self of all selves, the *Guru* of all *gurus*. The *pujá* begins at about 3 A.M., when the early morning is supposed to commence. Then worship goes on in various forms—sometimes illumination (*árati*), sometimes decoration with flowers, sometimes offering of sweets, sometimes offering of fruits, sometimes offering of bread and rice, sometimes arranging for rest, and so on. This continues up to midnight. There are definitely prescribed rituals for each of the forms of worship. Specific kinds of *mantras* (words and sentences with mystic powers) are required to be uttered and particular kinds of *áśanas* and *mudrás* (*yogic* postures) to be practised in connection with particular acts of worship. The *árati* ceremony at night-fall takes more than two hours. Similarly, much time is needed to perform each of the other functions, and every function must be performed punctually at the prescribed times. To discharge the duties of the *pujári* (worshipper) is itself a devotional *tapasyá* (austerity), and it necessarily involves restraint upon all the senses, shaking-off of lethargy and indolence, and control over all passions and impulses. For some months Gambhirnath had this training and he became an expert *pujári*.

For a certain period he was placed in charge of the stores. This is another responsible position in the *áśram*, and the faithful discharge of the duties of this position contributes greatly to the training of a *sádhaka* in *Karma-yoga* (the well-regulated performance of different forms of work with one high ideal in view) and *sevá-dharma* (the virtue of rendering disinterested services to all). He has to supply the articles necessary for the daily food-offerings to the Deity. He has to keep accounts of the varying number of *sádhus* and guests

present in the *áśram* day after day and to supply the different kinds of materials just in accordance with their necessity. He has to see that there may not be any mispending of any of the materials, and also that the inmates and the guests are properly served and none of them suffer any inconvenience on any account. He has to remember that all the materials at his disposal belong to *Náthji*, the Lord Deity of the *áśram*, that *Náthji* Himself is the House-Master there, and that all the *sádhus*, guests, servants, beggars etc., so long as they are there, are under the care of and to be looked after by *Náthji*. The store-keeper is in the responsible position of the representative of that all-loving ideal House-Lord as the host for serving them all and looking after their comforts, so far as their physical necessities are concerned. There may be among them persons suffering from serious illness, and he is to supply proper diet for them. Guests may arrive at the *áśram* at the most inconvenient time and may be taking rest under the shadow of any of the numerous trees at any corner of the *áśram*; he is to be on the alert that no such guests pass unnoticed and unattended. On the many festive occasions in the different seasons of the year, large numbers of *sádhus* assemble in the *áśram* to participate in the ceremonies, large numbers of *Bráhmanas* come as invited guests, and far larger numbers of poor, hungry, half-naked men, women and children present themselves at the door of the Lord of the universe for His blessings in the form of food and cloth. The store-keeper is expected to form correct estimates of the amounts of materials that should be enough for, but not much in excess of, the requirements on such occasions. In this way the store-keeper acquires a good training in *áśram*-management and in rendering services to all. The lower animals also residing in or coming to the *áśram* must be properly fed and taken care of. Any dereliction of duty on his part in the matter of rendering services to *Nathji's* creatures would amount to a crime and sin against *Nathji* Himself. Bábá Gambhirnath had an inborn love for being serviceable to others and

an inborn capacity for efficient management of such affairs. His faithful discharge of the duties in this position in the spirit of a true *bhakta-sádhaka* contributed greatly to the awakening and development of that capacity and to his self-discipline as a *Karma-yogi* and a loving servant of all.

Bábá Gambhirnath was placed in several such positions in turn. He ungrudgingly carried out the commands of his *Guru* and faithfully performed the duties of his positions in the right spirit of service to the *Guru* and the Deity and the community. In leisure hours he took lessons on the methods and techniques of *yoga* and deep meditation. In his heart of hearts, however, he felt an acute desire for leaving the *áśram*-life and employing his whole time and energy in practising the deeper and deeper processes of *yoga* in some solitary place. His body and mind were fully prepared for it. He was awaiting the permission of the *Guru*. Within a short time the *Guru* also felt that the disciple should be allowed to have his own way and to concentrate his entire spiritual energy on the pursuit of the Supreme Ideal. Having received the permission and blessings of the *Guru*, he bowed down to the *Guru*, the Deity, the *sádhus* and the *áśram* and took leave of them. He then started on his spiritual journey alone.

In this connection another point has to be mentioned. Within the short period of Bábá Gambhirnath's stay at the *áśram*, he went through the three prescribed forms of initiation (*dikshá*) which were necessary for a disciple to be taken into the fold of the full-fledged *Kanphat-yogis*. It is the general practice in this *sampradáya* (sect) that a seeker after the life of a *yogi* should first of all receive instruction (*upadesh*) from a *Guru* about the principles and practices of *yoga*, principally in its outer aspects and to some extent in its inner aspects as well. He may also be given some *mantra* (mystic formula) for *japa* (repeated utterance either within the mind or in an inaudible tone). If his capacity be of a higher order, he may also be given some formula signifying a great spiritual truth

for incessant contemplation and meditation. For example, he is taught a formula with the help of which he is to form the habit of thinking constantly that with his outbreathing his self is going out of the bodily limitation and identifying itself with the infinite Eternal Self-luminous Spirit immanent in the entire universe, and that with his in-breathing this Infinite Spirit is entering into the body and indentifying itself with his self. Thus along with everflowing stream of breathing in and breathing out there should be a continuous stream of the consciousness of the unity of the individual self and the Universal Self—the self and *Brahman*. This is called *ajapá*. It may have different forms. After such initiation, the seeker for *yoga* is called *Upadeshi Chelá* (instructed disciple) of the *Guru*.

Such initiation is necessary for all who want to practise *yoga* and is of fundamental importance from the point of view of spiritual discipline. But this does not make the disciple a *sádhu* in the restricted sense, since he may not acutally renounce the world and devote himself wholly to *yoga* practice. For the purpose of complete renunciation of all worldly concerns and attainment of freedom from all outward domestic and social responsibilities prescribed by the *Sástras*, a second initiation is necessary. Through this initiation the *sádhaka* gets a new birth and becomes an ascetic. In the place of the prescribed duties and obligations of a householder, he is now placed under fresh obligations in monastic life. He is deprived of his rights as a member of the society of householders, and acquires new rights as a member of a monastic society. It is the *Guru* that gives him the new birth and confers on him the new name, the new garment and the new rights and obligations and responsibilities, through a ceremonial process of initiation. When this initiation is obtained, the disciple is popularly called the *Chuti-Kátá-Chelá* of the *Guru*, because one of the important external functions in the ceremony is that the *Guru* cuts a lock of the disciple's hair (*chuti*) by way of shaving his head and giving him a new birth as a member of the monastic order.

In the *yogi* sect the *sádhu* at this stage is spoken of as an *aughar* (meaning perhaps, a homeless truth-seeker).

A third initiation is necessary for becoming a *yogi* in the full sectarian sense of the term. At the time of this last initiation, two big holes are made in the two ears of the initiate and he is made to put on two big *kundals* (rings) in them. These *kundals* are also known in the sect as *mudrá* or *darśan*. He then becomes what is vulgarly called a *Kanphat-yogi* (a *yogi* with ears rent) and esoterically called a *Darśan-yogi* (a *yogi* with the power of spiritual vision) and acquires all the rights and privileges of the highest orders of *sádhus* in this sect. This ceremony in its outer aspect may not apparently have much spiritual value, but it has a good deal of importance from the standpoint of position and prestige within the monastic order of the *Náth-yogi* sect. The sectarian idea, however, is that with this initiation the *Guru* awakens in the mind of the disciple extraordinary powers for spiritual vision (*darśan*) or self-realisation and ushers him into the inner chambers of *yoga*.

Bábá Gambhirnath had submitted to all these three forms of initiation before he left Gorakhpur. The first two forms of initiation, which are of great moral and spiritual significance, he received from Bábá Gopalnath, whom he revered as "the *Guru*" throughout his life. The third form of initiation he got from another saint, Bábá Sivanath, at *Devi-patan* (a place of pilgrimage, specially sacred to the *yogi* sect). It is to be noted that in this sect there is no definite rule as to whether all the forms of initiation should be taken from the same *Guru* or different *Gurus*. As Gambhirnath's third initiation took place during the lifetime of Bábá Gopalnath, it must have been at the instance of or with the permission of the latter that it was ceremoniously performed by another *yogi* of the *sampradáya*.

One of the specific emblems of the *sádhus*, both *aughar* and *kanphat*, of the *yogi* sect is that a small wooden flute-like pipe with holes is hung on their breast by means of a garland of

silken threads. The pipe is called *náda* and the garland is called *śeli*. By blowing into the pipe the wearer produces a sound like *pranava* (Om), which is the real *náda*. According to the *yogis*, in the innermost recess of the human heart, the *anáhata-náda* or the uninterrupted uniform sound of *pranava* is continuously going on, and the practice of concentration of the mind on this inner sound is an important step in the *yogic sádhaná*. For the purpose of practising it in the earlier stages, long-continued *pranava* sound has to be produced by the mouth and attention has to be fixed upon it. When attention is sufficiently concentrated so as not to be diverted by other sounds and it is inwardly directed, the unproduced, unbroken, uniform flow of natural *pranava* can be actually heard in the heart. The *pranava* is conceived as the manifestation, in the form of sound, of the Infinite Eternal Absolute Consciousness or *Brahman*. Thus, with the concentration of attention on the ever flowing *pranava* sound, continuous flow of thought on *Brahman* is practised. As a visible symbol of this eternal sound (*náda*) —this eternal manifestation of *Brahman* in the form of *pranava*, —the small pipe, which is called *náda* and through which a sound like that of *pranava* can be produced, is put on the heart of the aspirants for *yoga* by their *Gurus*. Bábá Gambhirnath got this symbol from his *Guru* Bábá Gopalnath, and though in the later years of his life, when he attained the *avadhuta* stage (the stage of perfectly conscious oneness with the Absolute Spirit), the wearing of this symbol was unnecessary, he preserved and wore it as a token of respect for the *Guru* and the *sampradáya* (sect) and as an example to others.

CHAPTER III

ON THE WAY TO BANARAS

On his leaving the shelter of the *Guru* and the *áśram*, the first problem that might naturally arise in the mind of the young aspirant for uninterrupted *yogic* practice was the problem of "daily bread." This becomes a real problem to the *yogis* and *sanyásis* in general, after they renounce the worldly life and take the vow not to have any property of their own, nor to employ their time and energy in earning their livelihood. For the sake of this "daily bread," most of them find it necessary either to seek refuge at some monasteries in which there is provision for it, or to dance attendance at the doors of householders and ask for alms. Both these resources have their accompanying troubles, which stand in the way of the true aspirant's uninterrupted devotion to spiritual self-discipline. Nor is it always very easy to procure even the bare necessaries of the body from these sources.

The young *Yogi* Gambhirnath had learnt from the *Bhagabat-Gitá* that the Lord Himself takes the entire charge of making all kinds of necessary provision for the *yogi* who is wholeheartedly devoted to Him and does not think for himself. He believed in the *Gitá* as embodying the eternal Divine truths 'sung' or spoken by the Lord Himself. He had unquestioning faith in every word of the *Gitá*, and his faith did not consist in mere intellectual or theoretical acquiescence, but it amounted to unshakable trust and confidence. He felt no hesitation in regulating his practical life in accordance with the ideal set up by the Lord Himself in the *Gitá*, and he could never think that the hopes held out by the Lord should not be realised.

Relying on the authority of the *Gitá*, he made up his mind not to take shelter at any other monastery, not to beg for alms,

not to inform anybody of his wants and requirements, not to think of what he should eat or drink or how he should protect himself from heat and cold, but to concentrate his entire attention upon the supreme spiritual ideal of life and to devote his time and energy absolutely to the courses of self-discipline prescribed for the realisation of that ideal. For the necessaries of his physical existence he took the vow of depending entirely on the mercy of God. Having thus mentally solved his bread-problem, he left the *áśram* and began to walk in the direction of Banaras. He always regarded Banaras as the most sacred place of pilgrimage. He used to speak of Banaras (Káshi-dhám) as the King of holy places (Tirtha-ráj), the land and water and atmosphere of which were surcharged with spirituality. He naturally thought of paying his homage to this holy city and living incognito for some time in its holy atmosphere.

In his journey on foot from Gorakhpur to Banaras, the firmness of his faith and the strength of his determination were put to severe test. During the first two days of his journey, nobody offered him any food. He went on walking. His body, which was unaccustomed to fasting, became weak, but his will was unbending. He felt the acuteness of hunger, but he could not bear the idea of allowing hunger to be victorious over his sacred vow, based on the authority of the word of the Lord. He thought that there must be something wanting in him,—that his surrender to the Lord and his devotion to the ideal were not as yet up to the mark. He did not present himself to any man. He took a more solitary path, and with all the power of his will he tried to be indifferent to hunger and to concentrate his whole attention upon the Supreme Lord of his heart. He became prepared for death rather than losing faith in the Lord and His word and admitting defeat in the first test of the sincerity of his vow. On the third day, though his body was weaker still, his mind was calm and tranquil, and he began to walk on with the surplus of his physical energy.

When he was thus dragging himself on in the lonely path under the mid-day sun, with his heart filled with undaunted faith in the love and mercy of the Lord, most unexpectedly did he come across a Brahman-*pandit* who was connected with the Gorakhnath Temple and with whom he had formed acquaintance there. He exchanged greetings with him in his characteristic manner, but he made no reference to his three days' fasting. From his appearance, however, the Brahman could easily infer that he was going without food. The Brahman knew his nature, and as a contrivance for keeping him waiting for some time and persuading him to take some food, he told him that he did not appear there and meet him by chance, that *Nathji*—the Lord Himself—had sent him to supply His *bhakta* with food which he urgently needed now. Gambhirnath was obliged to sit down under the orders of *Nathji*. The Brahman ran to the village near by, but cooked rice or bread was not available at that hour of the day. He, therefore, returned within the shortest possible time with a sufficient quantity of *chira* (fried rice) and milk. Gambhirnath took it as the Lord's merciful gift and ate to his heart's content. Having taken rest for a while, the young *yogi* with renewed strength started again for Banaras, and the Brahman proceeded in the direction of Gorakhpur. The Brahman communicated this interesting incident to the *sádhus* at the Gorakhnath Temple.

This experience further strengthened his conviction that if he could faithfully stick to his principle and preserve his trust in the merciful dispensation of the Lord in the midst of trials, the Lord would never fail to make provision for him. He went onward. Probably this journey from Gorakhpur to Banaras was his first longest journey on foot. As he started with the resolution to go to Banaras, he could not allow himself long rest anywhere on the way. It can be easily imagined that he must have been put to other physical hardships in course of the journey. But he never lost heart. Every trying circumstance tightened his determination. Relief always came

when it was most needed. He was left in no doubt about Divine providence. His self-surrender to Him was now complete. The journey taught him a great lesson. It had thus a great importance in the development of his spiritual insight. He acquired first-hand knowledge—of course according to his interpretation of the events of his experience—of the great truth that the Lord never forsook His *bhaktas* (devotees), that the more they trusted Him and surrendered themselves to Him and concentrated their mind and heart upon Him, the more could they find unmistakable evidence of His never-failing mercy and affection for them. He was now fully convinced that the struggle for existence and the anxieties on that score were only measures of the want of confidence in Divine dispensation. So long as men live in the world of egoism with greater faith in worldly forces and natural laws than in the supreme spiritual power of the Lord governing those forces and laws in accordance with the law of His love and mercy, they feel the unavoidable necessity of exerting themselves for the preservation of their physical existence and fighting against, as well as invoking the aid of, the finite worldly powers. Their attention being directed outwards, the forces which they experience as operating in the sensible world appear to be ultimate, and laws of their operation as the supreme laws of nature. But when deeper insight into the ultimate constitution of the world is obtained through spiritual discipline of the mind, it becomes evident that they are all secondary forces and secondary laws, derived from and regulated by the Supreme Power and Law of the Divine Will, and that the Power of the Divine Will is Spiritual Power and the Law of the Divine Will is the Law of Love. The sure means for direct experience of the operation of this Power and this Law is to concentrate the mind and heart upon the Lord in accordance with the instruction of the *Guru*, to surrender the body and the soul to Him in absolute love and trust, and to refrain from thinking about the physical necessities and outer circumstances.

As a result of his various experiences in course of his journey on foot along the solitary jungle path from Gorakhpur to Banaras and his deep reflections upon them with a devoted heart, the young *Yogi* Gambhirnath learnt to be completely indifferent to his physical necessities and to surrender himself in absolute faith to the Lord. He felt more and more deeply that the Lord was with him, in him and round about him. He realised that all the circumstances which affected him, whether pleasurably or painfully, were designed by the Lord and were the expressions of His love and mercy. The problem of his physical existence was perfectly solved. The only problem that now existed for him was how to attain the highest stage of *yoga*—how to make the human life perfectly spiritual and Divine.

CHAPTER IV

YOGA-PRACTICE AT BANARAS AND PRAYAG

Gambhirnath with his youthful energy and high aspiration had left Gorakhpur as a novice in esoteric *yoga-sádhaná* and returned there in his old age for taking charge of his *Guru's A'śram* when the ideal of his life was fully realised and he was recognised by all as a perfect *siddha-mahápurusha* (self-realised superman). The intervening period he spent in different parts of India, devoting himself to the culture of the higher and higher forms of *yoga* and the realisation of the higher and higher aspects of the Absolute Truth. There are four important holy places, with which his life as a *sádhaka* is known to have been principally associated—viz. Banaras, Prayag, the bank of the Narmada and the hills of Gaya. In each of these places he settled in solitude for a pretty long period for systematic discipline of the body, the senses, the nervous system, the psychical forces, the intellectual ideas and the awakened spiritual powers with a view to the attainment of the highest stage of *yoga* and the direct intuitive experience of the ultimate Reality immanent in and transcendent above the universe. Of these again the Kapildhárá hill of Gaya was chosen by him at the final stage of his *sádhaná* for the purpose of practising continuous absorption in the highest form of meditation and turning self-identification with the Supreme Spirit into his normal nature. It is at the Kapildhárá hill that he attained the highest object of his spiritual pursuit and became known as *siddha-yogiraj* (the King of self-realised *yogis*).

Though these four localities deserve special mention in connection with his intense and persistent spiritual quest, he travelled almost throughout the length and breadth of India

and visited most of the holy places, some at the *sádhaka*-stage and some at the *siddha*-stage. No systematic account of this period of his life is available. He lived mostly in solitude and tried to remain unnoticed by the people as far as practicable. He did not approach men even for begging food. Even when approached by inquisitive people, he hardly opened his lips and eyes and noticed their presence. Very few of the incidents, which must have happened to him during his travels or in course of his practice, could, therefore, come to the knowledge of the outside world. But in India people appear to have an inborn tendency and capacity to seek out persons of high spiritual attainments. Even those who hide themselves in caves and jungles are found out and reports about their greatness get wide publicity. In this land of spiritual culture a saint is far more talked about than a statesman or a scientist or a military genius. Bábá Gambhirnath did not studiously conceal himself from the gaze of others. He was supremely indifferent as to whether others looked at him or not. It is no wonder that even before he reached the goal of his *sádhaná*, people with religious inquisitiveness recognised his spiritual greatness, kept eyes on his movement with respectful interest and talked with one another about his extraordinary *yogic* accomplishments. But the details of his experiences could not possibly be known to them. When afterwards he allowed people to assemble round him at Gorakhpur, he was altogether silent about his own achievements and experiences and could not be persuaded to give any account of his past life. He would always avoid 'me' and 'mine' in his talks. Hence the account of this important portion of his life must necessarily be as vague and superficial as that of his early life. The history of the development of the inner life of a man can be directly known only to himself, and if he remains silent about it, it must remain eternally unknown to the world at large. The outer life of a man also, who is inwardly great, but outwardly humble, becomes known only to a very limited

extent, especially if the greater portion of his life is passed in solitude.

We shall, however, try to give here a brief outline of what we could gather from the reports which somehow got currency among the *sádhus* and from what occasionally slipped from the lips of *Yogiraj* himself in course of his instruction to his disciples in later life.

Having reached the sacred city of Banaras, he found that the place was not only traditionally holy, but it was really favourable for systematic *yoga-sádhaná* at that stage of his life. In order to feel the sacredness of such a place, the feeling heart requires to be sufficiently pure and responsive. The tumults and vices, which are so generally experienced in such populous places of pilgrimage, are for the majority of people formidable obstacles to the appreciation of the spiritual influences that are operating there. The hearts of worldly-minded men, being in tune with the rough music of worldliness, naturally respond to and are agitated by the tumultuous and vicious waves of this music, and fail to listen to and appreciate the under-current of sweet and fine spiritual music continually flowing there. The spiritual vibrations which are created in the atmosphere of a locality by the long, intense and effective spiritual *sádhaná* of a great saint continue there for a long time even after the saint is gone, and cannot be easily destroyed even by the anti-spiritual vibrations which may be produced there by the worldly and ungodly thoughts and actions of numerous men. Those vibrations can be felt by spiritually-tuned hearts of truth-seekers, even though they may be unacquainted with the history of the place and its association with the saint. When those spiritual vibrations are created by the *sádhaná* and *siddhi* of a long line of spiritually great men from time immemorial, they become perpetual and inexhaustible and indestructible, and the soil and water and air of the locality become saturated with their influence. This is the case with most of the places which are regarded as holy, and the degree of holiness depends upon

the number and greatness of the saints whose spiritual powers created those vibrations. Whoever can free his mind and heart from worldly thoughts and feelings and desires, and put them in tune with the spiritual rhythm of the place, can actually hear that spiritual music and feel its influence. If a man devotes himself sincerely and earnestly to spiritual practice at such a place, the mind becomes easily concentrated upon the object of pursuit, and the truth is realised within a comparatively short period.

As the result of his intense craving for spiritual progress and total indifference to all worldly concerns, and in consequence of the preliminary *sádhaná* by which he had thoroughly purified his body, mind and heart, Bábá Gambhirnath's entire nature was wholly irresponsive to the worldly commotions of the city and perfectly responsive to the spiritual influence of the holy region. The attraction, which he already had for this immortal centre of Hindu spiritual culture, was thus greatly strengthened by his direct experience of its spiritual influence. He made up his mind to establish himself here for some time. He selected a comparatively lonely spot on the bank of the sacred Gangá. He used to take his bath in its holy water and to go to offer worship to *Viśwanáth* (the Lord of the Universe) at the Temple now and then. Otherwise he spent his days and nights in the selected spot, absorbed in his *yogic* practice and intense meditation. According to his principle, he did not go out for begging food. He did not even accept any invitation to take his meals at any *áśram* or anybody's house. But somehow or other food generally came to him. In this land of *Annapurná* (the Consort of Viśwanáth, the Mother of the universe, the Source of all *Anna* or food) nobody—none of Her children—could die from want of food, and least of all a saintly person who gave up all thought about food and devoted himself wholeheartedly to the worship of the Supreme Spirit (*Paramatma*). The attention of some person, willing to serve a *sádhu*, was every day drawn towards this self-contained ascetic, and he

thought himself fortunate when this ascetic partook of the food presented by him. The truth which he verified in course of his journey became part and parcel of his life now as well as afterwards.

So long as the young *sádhu* Gambhirnath could remain unknown, unnoticed and uncared for, as only one of the numerous *sádhus* residing at Banaras, the place was virtually solitary for him. As the people of Banaras are accustomed to meeting numerous *sádhus* of different sects in the streets and the monasteries, under the shades of trees and on the bank of the Gangá, and as many of these *sádhus* are not found to be of the ideal type, the sight of a *sádhu*, even with eyes closed and lips sealed and exposed to heat and cold and rain, does not immediately attract their attention and inspire them with a feeling of reverence. Accordingly this young *Yogi* also could escape notice for a long time and go on with his *sádhaná* completely undisturbed.

But fire, if blazing, refuses to remain permanently concealed. The spiritual fire blazing within the heart of the *yogi* soon shed its lustre outside. The halo over his face began to rouse curiosity among the passers-by. His perfect mastery over his passions, his utter indifference to all worldly concerns, his absolute freedom from lust, greed and anger, his perfect calmness and tranquillity, his continuous absorption in deep meditation, began to attract the notice of pious-minded inquisitive people. They realised and talked among themselves that here was a *yogi*, who was not of the ordinary type, who was not one of the many they were used to seeing at Banaras. They began to pay more and more attention to him. People in distress began to seek redress from him. He began to feel that the place was no longer solitary for him. He had not yet attained the highest stage of *yoga*. He still required a long course of self-discipline. But people began to speak of him as a *siddha-mahátmá* and to pray for his mercy. His heart was naturally soft, so far as the distress of other people was concerned. The

feelings of compassion and sympathy were sometimes roused in his heart. He sometimes felt tempted to exert a bit of his power to alleviate their sufferings. But his judgment made him cautious and told him that it was verily a temptation and a way to fall. Sometimes his judgment had to fight with compassion. He, however, became convinced that to yield to compassion at that stage would amount to a misapplication of the power he might have acquired through the grace of the Lord and would be a serious obstacle in the path of his advancement towards the highest object of his ambition. He regarded it as a trial to which Viswanath put him. He passed the test and got mastery over his compassion.

He, however, thought it necessary to fly away from this sacred city, because he could no longer enjoy the bliss of solitude there. To whatever part of the city he might go, people would flock to him. He must retire to a place where he was unknown and where he would have the opportunity for ascending to the higher and higher planes of *yoga*. He is said to have been at Banaras for a little more than three years at a stretch at this period. One day he made obeisance to Viswanath and left Banaras. His admirers there discovered to their utter astonishment that the great *Yogi* had mysteriously disappeared from their midst.

Having left Banaras, he started for Prayag, which is also one of the most highly respected sacred places in India. On reaching there he did his homage to the *tirtha* and performed his religious duties in accordance with the prevailing rules and customs. But here he did not select for his *sádhaná* any spot on the side of Prayag, perhaps apprehending that he would soon be detected and the people would create disturbance. He discovered a solitary cave on the opposite bank of the Ganges, near the confluence of the two most sacred rivers of India, the Gangá and the Jumna. The locality is known as Jhunsi. There were several artificial caves (*guhá*) by the side of the sacred river. They did not

generally attract the notice of the people living and moving in towns and villages. They faced the river. The site was solitary and as such favourable for *sádhaná*. The *guhás* were probably made by some well-intentioned people with the purpose of giving opportunities for spiritual self-discipline to those *sádhus*, who wanted to practise *yoga* and meditation in solitude.

Bábá Gambhirnath occupied the *guhá* which lay vacant and became absorbed in his own business, which was nothing but *yogic* practice and deep meditation. Here the Lord had probably already made arrangement for supplying food to him and looking after his comforts. Soon after he went there, a young *sádhu* of his own sect, named Mukutnath, happened to be associated with him and deeply attached to him in love and reverence. In all earnestness he devoted himself to his service. Bábáji remained absorbed in meditation in the *guhá* almost day and night, and Mukutnath procured food for him from the locality at the proper time, and came to him every now and then to see what he might require and how he could be of any service to the *Mahátmá*. Here also Bábá Gambhirnath stayed for about three years.

It is said that the particular cave which gave shelter to *yogi* Gambhirnath for about three years was generally shunned by other *sádhus*, because it abounded with scorpions and was off and on invaded by poisonous snakes. Gambhirnath who practised absolute reliance upon the mercy of the Lord and learnt to look upon all creatures as the living embodiments of the Divine, was free from all kinds of fear. The appearance of the snakes and scorpions never frightened him. Allowing them to live and move and play freely around him, he seated himself in their midst and was absorbed in the thought of the all-pervading Lord. He was a perfect embodiment of *ahimsá* (harmlessness). There was no spirit of violence or poisonousness in his heart. Probably the poisonous and harmful creatures responded to his *ahimsá* and *prema*, his non-violence

and love. They never did any injury to him. Perhaps they did service to him by keeping others away. He tested there the truth of the spiritual assertion that love and non-violence could conquer the hearts of all creatures, however outwardly ferocious and mischievous they might be. It was believed by those who knew him that during his three years of *sádhaná* at Jhunsi, Gambhirnath ascended to a very high plane of spiritual experience and acquired considerable *yogic* powers.

CHAPTER V

A WANDERING MEDITATOR

At Banaras and Prayag Bábá Gambhirnath practised the sixfold forms of esoteric *yoga* continuously and intensively for about six years. In each of these places he had a fixed refuge. At Banaras he had got a small hut on the bank of the Gangá, and at Prayag he could occupy a small cave or *guhá* on the Jhunsi-side of the Gangá. It is believed that in these two places he went through all the important *yogic* practices necessary for the transformation of the nervous and psychic systems, so as to turn them into perfectly fit vehicles for the reception and retention of transcendent spiritual illumination and energy. By the constant practice of concentration of the nervous and psychic currents upon the higher and higher forms of *dháraná* (contemplation) and *dhyána* (meditation), he gradually rose to a very high plane of consciousness and realised many subtle spiritual truths. He was naturally endowed with spiritual capacities of such a high order that his progress was extraordinarily rapid. As a result of these six years' uninterrupted *sádhaná* he ascended to a spiritual plane, which it might be difficult for an ordinary *sádhaka* to reach through a whole life's continued practice. He was now practically a *Brahmavit yogi*,—a saint who realised in deep meditation the identity of the individual soul with the Supreme Spirit, and experienced the world as pervaded by the same Spirit.

He now thought of becoming a wandering *sádhu*. This is also prescribed in the *Yoga-śástras*. So long he was, to use the technical expressions of the scriptures, a *Kutichaka* (a *sádhu* who undergoes spiritual discipline at a fixed lonely place), and now he wished to become a *Bahudaka*, a *sádhu* who undergoes spiritual discipline while wandering in various places

and tasting different kinds of water (*udaka*). At this stage a *sádhu* is required to move from place to place ; he should not have any fixed place of residence ; he should put himself under various climatic conditions; he should have to adapt himself to all sorts of unfamiliar circumstances; he should wander about without any definite expectation as regards food and shelter. While moving in the midst of such uncertainties, he should always try to remain in a meditative mood, and to keep his mind perfectly calm and quiet, free from all kinds of anxiety and restlessness; his attention should always be fixed upon the Lord and the Supreme Ideal of life. It is by this form of self-discipline that the spiritual knowledge and powers acquired by a *sádhaka* in the previous stages are sought to be deeply rooted in his nature so as to remain untarnished under all possible circumstances. It is through the practical application of the knowledge and powers to the divergent experiences of the wandering life that they become part and parcel of the *sádkaka's* nature. Many truths, which are intuited through contemplation and meditation, are retained in the intellect as good and beautiful concepts, so long as the belief in them is not put to acid tests in practical life. In course of the wanderings, occasions for such tests are sure to arise. Strict vigilance over the mental conditions and constant remembrance of the truths acquired are necessary to stand such tests. The *sádhaka* becomes aware of many moral and spiritual weaknesses which might be lurking in his mind, but of which he was not conscious, owing to the absence of any trying circumstances. When he becomes conscious of them, he gets the opportunity of removing them by means of suitable moral and spiritual practices. Many new experiences with regard to the ways of men and the world are acquired, and many new truths concerning the ways of the Lord in relation to His *bhaktas* (devotees) and the creatures in general flash upon the mind through these experiences. For the all-sided development of knowledge and character, travelling has been universally regarded as of great importance. The

plan of the life of a *yogi* has been so conceived that all the sides of his character may be harmoniously developed towards the supreme spiritual Ideal, that his *jnána-śakti* (power of knowledge), *bhakti-śakti* (power of love and reverence) and *karma-śakti* (power of action and service) may have full scope for being refined and perfected, that his life may become a model to men in general.

The life of Bábá Gambhirnath was being moulded, without of course any distinct knowledge on his part, by the Supreme Ruler of his destiny and the destiny of all people, in such a fashion that he might become in future an ideal spiritual teacher to the truth-seeking, but worldly-wise and sceptical men of the present age, and might put before their eyes a living embodiment of the most perfect type of an Indian *yogi*. He was, therefore, required to gain every kind of experience in his life and to pass through all the stages of *yoga* practice. As the result of his preliminary training at Gorakhpur and his six years' strenuous practice at Banaras and Prayag, he had learnt the art, formed the habit and enjoyed the bliss of remaining immersed in deep contemplation and meditation for a long time in the same posture and at the same spot under favourable circumstances. He was now inspired by the Lord, to Whom he surrendered himself, with the idea of experiencing the life of a wandering ascetic (*paribrájak*) and practising contemplation and meditation under divergent physical and moral conditions. He got out of the *guhá* and started on his wandering career.

No definite account of the places he visited and the experiences he got in course of this wandering is available. From occasional references in course of his instructions to his disciples and from the reports of other *sádhus* with whom he came in contact at that period, it could be gathered that there were very few important places of pilgrimage in India which he did not visit and about which he could not give detailed information. All the holy places of all the provinces of India, including the Himalayas, were known to him. During about

six years of his wandering life, he travelled from Kailas and Mansarowar to Rameswaram, from Amarnath to Pasupatinath and Chandranath, from Dwaraka to Gangasagar. He generally went on foot and alone. But no details of his experiences in all these places could be gathered. He took a pretty long period in circumambulating the holy river, Narmada, and spent a few months in deep meditation at Amarkantak. It is quite possible that at the time of taking leave of the Gangá, he had the Narmada in his mind, because like the Gangá the Narmada is universally respected by the Hindus as one of the most sacred rivers. In some of the *Puranas* the water of the Narmada is described as more holy than that of any other sacred river. It is said that the holiness of the Gangá, the Jamuna and the other rivers varies in degrees in accordance with the spiritual greatness of the sacred places by the side of which they pass, but the entire territory through which the Narmada passes from its source to its mouth is equally sacred. However, different *Puranas* may differ in their glorification of the different sacred rivers, or each may be described as the greatest according to the universe of discourse. But from time immemorial up to the present day there has been a custom among the *sádhus* to circumambulate the Narmada at some stage of their life, and this is regarded as a highly virtuous act and as of great help in the path of spiritual progress. An aspirant for spiritual attainment is instructed to begin his walk from the source of the Narmada and proceed towards its mouth by one side, then cross the river at its mouth and return from the mouth to its source by the other side. Bábá Gambhirnath also followed the tradition and performed this virtuous act of circumambulation (*parikramá*).

As a *yogi*, yearning for the attainment of perfect liberation from all kinds of bondage, he was not of course eager to acquire any religious merit by the performance of such virtuous acts. It was his principle to perform the duties prescribed or recommended by the *śástras*, when suitable occasions presented

themselves, out of reverence for the *S'ástras* and the *Rishis* of old. But he would not deliberately seek for such occasions. The regulative principle of his life with regard to outward actions was neither to create occasions for the performance of works nor to shirk them when they presented themselves without his seeking. Circumambulation of the Narmada also was such an act and was performed in such a spirit.

It is not definitely known whether he purposely directed his steps towards the Narmada at the time of beginning his wandering life or he arrived at the Narmada without premeditation in course of his wandering; but it is a fact that when he reached the bank of this sacred river, he thought it his duty to avail himself of this opportunity to pay homage to the *S'ástras* and the customs of the *sádhu*-society and to utilise a part of his wandering period in going round this river.

Since he was not chiefly interested in somehow finishing this pious act of circumambulation and thereby acquiring religious merit, he did not feel impelled to move on and on every day. His mind was always fixed on the supreme Ideal of his life. Whenever in course of his journey he found any locality specially suited to deep meditation, whenever he discovered through his spiritual insight that the atmosphere of a place was surcharged with any special spiritual influence, whenever he obtained a place specially glorified by the association of any great saint, he was almost spontaneously immersed in deep mediation and settled there for a week or a month or two months or four months, according to the degree of attractiveness, convenience and spiritual influence of the place. In such cases he chose for his seat either a vacant hut or the shade of a tree or some piece of stone or the plain sands with the sky above and the flowing river in front. So long as his mind was in a deeply meditative mood and in the enjoyment of some special spiritual bliss, he stayed in the same place. When the mood was a little relaxed, he left the place and began to walk again.

Bábá Gambhirnath took about four years to complete his journey round the Narmada. At Amarkantak, the source of this sacred river, he put up for a comparatively long period. The place is specially suitable for *sádhaná*. It is a favourite place to the *yogis*.

The *Yogiraj*, in course of his instruction to his disciples in later life, sometimes hinted that a sincere truth-seeker might obtain many extraordinary experiences of great moral and spiritual value in course of his wanderings in sacred places. But he could never be persuaded to narrate the experiences he himself gained during his own wandering life. Indirect reference to a few extraordinary incidents was, however, made by him occasionally by way of illustration of some truths which he happened to utter to his disciples and which they wanted to have more clearly substantiated. One such incident relates to his Narmada *parikramá*.

On one occasion at Gorakhpur a topic arose with regard to the lives of such ferocious creatures as serpents, tigers etc. and the attitude which should be cherished towards them. The *Yogiraj* incidentally mentioned that they were not always ferocious creatures, but that sometimes saints with extraordinary *yogic* powers moved on earth in the shape of serpents, tigers etc. Different saints might have different reasons for assuming such bodies, but it was a fact that they did so. The hearers took this opportunity of pressing him for concrete instances. He referred to an event which he experienced on the bank of the Narmada. In course of his journey in that region one particular spot attracted him. He found an empty cottage there. He entered it and was absorbed in meditation. The next morning a big serpent of extraordinary nature appeared before him, fixed its gaze upon him for some time, and then respectfully crept round him and went away. The sight of the serpent produced an inexplicable spiritual effect upon his mind and he passed into the state of trance. The second morning also the same serpent appeared and

behaved in the same way and he obtained the same experience. This was repeated in the third morning as well. On that day a *Brahmachari* arrived and told him that he was the permanent occupant of the cottage. Of course he was not displeased with him for his occupying the cottage in his absence. In course of conversation the *Brahmachari* informed him that an extraordinary *Mahátmá* with spiritual attainments of a supremely high order was residing in that locality in the body of a serpent and that the *Brahmachari* had been dwelling in that cottage for twelve years in a prayerful and meditative mood with a view to having a *darśan* (sight) of the *Mahátmá*. Bábá Gambhirnath also spoke to the *Brahmachari* of the blessed experience he had gained on each of these three days. The *Brahmachari* was visibly moved and said, "Oh! how fortunate you are! You are a new comer, and the *Mahátmá* has himself come to see you and to give you *darśan* on each of the days you have been here, while he has not taken mercy upon me even once during these twelve years."

The *Yogiraj* told the disciples that this was not an exceptional incident, and that there were many such *Mahátmás* dwelling in subhuman forms voluntarily or compulsorily for various reasons. He came across many such *Mahátmás*. He referred to his meeting some *yogis* living and moving in the guise of tigers. The lesson which he taught by reference to such cases was that a man with spiritual aspiration should not look down upon or be cruel to any creature, because no one knew who was what.

After Narmada *parikramá* he travelled through a number of other sacred places. Everywhere he immersed himself deeply in the spiritual waters of the place. Then he heard from some travelling ascetics of the sect, whom he chanced to meet, that his *Guru* Bábá Gopalnath had departed from the world and that his senior *Gurubhai* (fellow-disciple) Bábá Balabhadranath, who according to custom had stepped into the position of the *Mohunt* with the consent of the monks of the sect, earnestly

requested him to return to Gorakhpur at least for a short period. Out of deep respect for the *Guru* and in compliance with the request of the elder brother, he turned his steps towards Gorakhpur, but only for a flying visit.

CHAPTER VI

THE PRACTICE OF DEEP MEDITATION AT KAPILDHA'RA'

Bábá Gopalnath breathed his last in 1880 A.D. His first disciple Bábá Balabhadranath succeeded him as the *Mohunt* of the Gorakhpur Temple. He was very affectionate towards his brother-disciple Bábá Gambhirnath, and the latter also held the former in high esteem. When Gambhirnath went to Gorakhpur to pay his tribute of respect to the immortal soul of his revered and beloved *Guru* and to offer his homage to the new head of the monastery, Balabhadranath was unwilling to part with him again. He had insight enough to appreciate the spiritual greatness attained by his younger brother. The report of his exceptionally *yogic* way of life,—his absolute aloofness from all matters of this world, his complete indifference even to the imperative needs of physical life, his perfect self-surrender to the Lord and his continuous flow of meditation under all circumstances,—had already reached the ears of his *Guru* and his fellow-disciples and other *sádhus* of the Gorakhpur *áśram* through the agency of the wandering ascetics of different sects, who went now and then on pilgrimage to this holy centre of the *yogi* sect, and many of whom had either happened to meet him in course of their roamings or heard of him from other ascetics.

The reputation of the high spiritual attainments of the great saints, who dedicate their lives to *yogic* discipline and deep meditation in solitude, is not unoften spread throughout the country by such wandering *sádhus*. Bábá Gambhirnath had not, as has been previously noted, studiously concealed himself at an inaccessible hill or jungle for his *yogic* practice, and though generally escaping the notice of the worldly-minded people,

he was not completely hidden from the view of those pious men, who were actuated by the spirit of inquisitiveness about true *sádhakas* and *siddhas*. He generally travelled to, and selected for his *sádhaná*, such sacred localities, as are, though lonely, regarded as places of pilgrimage by the Hindus and occasionally visited by them. Thus, without his seeking and without his knowledge, Bábá Gambhirnath had become well-known to, and revered from a distance by, hundreds of religious men in different parts of the country. His *Guru*, his brother-disciples and the *sádhus* with whom he had been associated in the *áśram*, felt naturally proud of him, when they got authentic reports of his superordinary spiritual attainments from different unimpeachable sources. Bábá Balabhadranath, when he got him back by his side, wanted him to reside permanently in the *A'śram* and share with him the responsibility of efficiently managing and developing the great socio-religious institution, which their *Guru* had left to their charge, in accordance with the high ideal set up by Gorakhnath, the founder of the sect and the *Guru* of all *yogis*.

Bábá Gambhirnath, however, was now in a plane of spiritual experience and outlook, in which he could not bear the idea of living the *A'śram* life. After his experiences as a wandering meditator, he was feeling the need of establishing himself again in some suitable lonely place for continuously practising the highest forms of meditation and perfectly spiritualising his entire mental, vital and physical being. In the *Yoga-śástra*, after the aforesaid *kutichaka* and the *bahudaka* stages of self-discipline, four other stages are mentioned, viz., *hansa*, *paramahansa*, *turiyátita* and *abadhuta*. Each of these stages has its specific *sádhaná*, and each of them leads to higher and higher planes of spiritual experience. *Siddhi* or success in each stage gives a glimpse of and creates a deeper yearning for the experience of the next higher stage. This is not the place for making any attempt at giving an idea of the specific characteristics of these stages. The spiritual experiences in them are

too subtle to be comprehended by the exercise of theoretical reason in the normal planes of our experience. The *abadhuta* stage is regarded as the highest in this sense that the entire existence—including the physical body and the physical world—is then spiritualised, so that at that stage the mundane and the supramundane, the inner and the outer, the subject and the object, are experienced as indentified, and it is the same Absolute Spirit that is perceived unveiled within and without in the states of waking and dream just as in the state of trance.

How could Bábá Gambhirnath, who had the potentiality of the highest order of spiritual realisation in him, rest contented till he had actually attained it ? Ordinary pious men as well as *yogis* of the lower ranks might extol him as a *siddha-yogi*, since he had already transcended the lower planes of *yoga* and attained a state rarely reached by *yogis*. But how could he remain satisfied at that stage ? What he knew to be perfect self-fulfilment had not yet been attained. Nevertheless, at the earnest request of his elder brother, *Mohunt* Balabhadranath, he stayed in the Gorakhnath Temple for a few months and even took charge of the *pujá* (ceremonial worship) for a month or so. Having thus shown his respectful consideration for the feelings of the head of the monastery to which he belonged and the good reputation of his *Guru's áśram*, he again left Gorakhpur in quest of the ultimate ideal of his life. He was on the lookout for some solitary place suitable for continuous practice of the deepest meditation on the Absolute Spirit,—the ultimate Reality of the self and the universe. Having visited some localities with holy associations, he at last arrived at the hills of Gaya, where one lonely spot attracted him most as the place he had been looking for.

Gaya is an ancient, well-known place of great sanctity. It is here that Lord Buddha was blessed with the noblest spiritual Light which has been showing the path of *nirvána* or liberation to millions of men and women, and inspiring them with the ideal of selfless love and service for two and a half millenniums.

It is here that Lord Gouranga got his first inspiration of and initiation into the religion of Divine Love, which has given a new, beautiful philosophy to the society of the learned and which has at the same time brought the Supreme Lord of the Universe so near to the hearts of all men and women, even of the most downtrodden and depressed classes. The entire territory round about Gaya is sanctified by the *sádhaná* and *siddhi* of numerous extraordinary saints of ancient and modern times. The hills in the Gaya regions are neither too high nor too low. It is not too difficult for men, accustomed to the climate of the plains, to dwell in them in all seasons of the year. But nobody without any definite purpose in view can feel any inclination to haunt such places. They are not inaccessible even to men of moderate strength, but not very easy of access. The people living there may procure their food and clothing from the inhabited localities of the plains, if they require, but this is by no means a very easy task. Consequently, it is only the truth-seeking *yogis*, who are eager for practising *yoga* in solitude, that choose such places for residence. Indeed, from time immemorial, the hills of Gaya have been resorted to by sincere *sádhakas* of various religious sects during the period of their continuous spiritual self-discipline. Some of these hills are associated with the sacred memories of Kapil, Nagarjuna, Pareshnath and other illustrious saints, who left indelible marks upon the spiritual history of India. There are many streams flowing down in a zigzag course from their inexhaustible fountains. There are many natural caves or *guhás* which are utilised by the *sádhus* for their dwelling, and many artificial *guhás* also have been constructed in different parts of the hills in accordance with the instruction of the *Yoga-śástras* for the convenience of the *yogis*.

Bábá Gambhirnath took a fancy for one of these hills in the proximity of the town of Gaya. It derived its name from a beautiful living streamlet, which descended from a spring in some highly elevated region and flowed on with the singing voice of perpetual freshness day and night towards human

habitation, in order, as it were, to place itself in the service of the thirsty men and women of the lower plains. This streamlet was known as the Kapildhárá (the *dhárá* or stream of Kapila). It is not, however, known what historical connection this stream or the hill by its side might have with that most ancient philosopher (*ádividwán*) of India and the most renowned prototype of all *siddhas* or self-realised saints ("*siddhánám Kapilo Munih*"). It is quite possible that Kapila himself or some illustrious *yogi* of the Kapila school of philosophy and religion took his abode here at some period, and the name of the place was associated with the hallowed name of this ancient teacher of philosophical religion. The part of the hill-range by the side of the stream, which was so very favourable in all respects for *yoga-sádhaná*, was known by the name of the Kapildhárá hill. At the foot of this hill, but considerably above the level of the plains, there was a very old temple of Siva. This Siva also was known as Kapileśwar Siva (Siva, the Lord of Kapila).

This hill was chosen by the great *Yogi* Gambhirnath for systematic practice of deep meditation of the highest spiritual plane, and he determined to continue the practice here till he would attain the perfect *abadhuta* stage of *yoga*. The outward appearance of the place has greatly changed since he first appeared here and was attracted by the propitiousness of its atmosphere, situation and environments for the highest type of spiritual culture. At that time there was no *áśram* or cottage or suitable cave near about the place he selected. There was no renowned *sádhu* near by to attract people to the locality. The temple of Kapileśwar Siva was not so very close to it, nor was it frequently visited by pilgrims. The hills around abounded in trees and shrubs, which not unoften offered shelter to ferocious animals and consequently frightened away human beings.

Yogiraj Gambhirnath, unaccustomed for a long time to think about his food and shelter and other requirements, took his seat on the Kapildhárá hill and resolved upon devoting

himself to intense and continuous meditation in that solitary place till the final end was reached. He began to pass his days and nights under the open firmament, without paying any heed to heat and cold, rain and storm. He had only a *kaupin* (loin-cloth) and a blanket for his clothing, a *kharpar* (a small vessel made of cocoanut shell) for taking food and drink, and a small T-shaped rod called *fauri*, for occasionally reclining the body on. These were his only earthly possessions. He had perfect faith that whatever he would really require for his existence must come to him in time, if he could only stick to his ideal with complete indifference to the earthly requisites, and whatever actually presented itself to him without his seeking was regarded by him as constituting all his true requirements. With such absolute trust in the Divine order of the world, and with the entire energy of the mind and the body concentrated upon the Highest Good to be realised, the great *Yogi* settled himself down on the bare breast of the Kapildhárá hill.

The Lord of the universe is the most unfailing servant of His sincere devotees. He invariably makes suitable arrangements from behind the scene for the supply of all physical, moral and spiritual requisites to those who surrender themselves in love and devotion to Him, who sacrifice all objects of this-worldly and other-worldly enjoyments for the sake of perfect union with Him and who seek for nothing else but the realisation of Absolute Truth about Him and the enjoyment of the perfect beauty and bliss of His transcendent nature. Yogiraj Gambhirnath was fully convinced of this truth, not only from the word of the Lord, but also from his lifelong experience. Accordingly at Kapildhárá, he did not care as to what provision would be made for him by the Lord of his heart and the universe. He took a fancy to the place, settled there and immersed himself in meditation.

In a day or two the attention of a man, named Akku, was attracted towards him. The man was a poor day-labourer belonging to a low grade of the Hindu society. He used to

go now and then to these hilly tracts for the purpose of cutting wood and procuring fuel. He and his brother Munni lived with their wives and children in a village at a short distance from the foot of the hill. They somehow managed to make their two ends meet by dint of such laborious works. It was this poor illiterate labourer that the Lord engaged in rendering all necessary services to the devoted *Yogi* in the first period of his sojourn on the Kapildhárá hill. Without waiting for any order or instruction, Akku approached the *Yogi* and began to render services to him. The *Yogi* paid little attention to the man and his services. He was almost always in a state of deep meditation. He was unmindful of his surroundings as well as of his requirements. But Akku appeared to perceive by some internal sense what he might require for his comfort. He used to procure food and drink, fruit and milk from his own house or from the neighbourhood, and to place them before the meditating *Yogi*. He would get firewood from the surrounding places and kindle a *dhuni* (a sacred fire) near him. He would remove weeds and shrubs and stones from the place where the *Yogi* took his seat and would try to keep the place as clear and consecrated as he could. The more he served him, the more did he feel attracted towards him. By and by service to the *Yogi* became the first and foremost of his daily duties. This demanded a good deal of sacrifice on the part of this day-labourer and he made the sacrifice without being even conscious of making it. Gradually his brother began to take share in the service to the *Yogi* and the entire family became attached to him. All the members, including the children, learnt to look upon Bábá Gambhirnath as their own and as the god of their heart.

For two or three months Akku had the enviable fortune of being the sole agent of the Lord to look after the physical comforts of this great *Yogi*. In his *jivanmukta* stage Bábá Gambhirnath's affectionate treatment towards the members of the Akku-family appeared to indicate that he regarded himself as greatly

indebted to Akku and his family. On one occasion he even went out of his way to show some miraculous power for saving the family from a domestic calamity. We shall refer to it hereafter.

After two or three months Bábá Gambhirnath was provided with another most devoted servant in the person of a sincere truth-seeking *sádhu*, named Nripatnath (*Nripatináth*—Lord of Kings). Being impelled by a deep yearning for the realisation of the highest good of life, Nripatnath had renounced the world and had been wandering in the hills and jungles and holy places in search of a *Guru* to his liking. In course of these wanderings the Ruler of his destiny brought him to the Kapildhárá hill, and the very first sight of the extraordinary figure of the meditating saint there inspired him with the conviction that this was the man he had been seeking for. Within his mind he at once recognised this *Yogi* as his *Guru* and devoted himself to his service. He begged for formal initiation into *yogic sádhaná*. But Bábá Gambhirnath definitely refused in silence to take the position of a *Guru* and immersed himself in meditation. Though his behaviour was always mild and gentle and his refusal was also courteous, his determination was unshakable. He was determined not to recognise anybody as his disciple, at least not till he was firmly established in the highest plane of spiritual consciousness. But Nripatnath also was not a man to be disheartened or to give up the company of the *Mahápurusha*, who while inwardly capturing his heart outwardly refused to accept him as his own. He left the matter of formal initiation and instruction with regard to *yogic* practices to the sweet will of the *Guru* of his choice, but dedicated his life to his service. He took the entire charge of all the arrangements necessary for giving the utmost facility to the great *Yogi* in practising the deepest meditation without any kind of discomfort or disturbance. Akku was now relieved of much of his responsibility, and had only to carry out the orders of Nripatnath. Nripatnath had already, through his contact with many *yogis* in the past, acquired a good deal of experience

as to the physical and environmental requirements of a saint immersed in *yoga-sádhaná*. He had a strong physique, dauntless courage, indefatigable energy and rare power of enduring hardship. The devoted service of such a man was, humanly speaking, essential for Bábá Gambhirnath's physical existence and undisturbed meditation at this stage.

A few months after Nripatnath's taking charge of the body of the *Yogi*, another truth-seeker appeared there and became a helpful associate of Nripatnath in the service of the meditating saint. His name was Suddhanath. He also was on the lookout for a *yogi-guru*. To see Gambhirnath was to be charmed by him. From Nripatnath's experience he was convinced that it would not be easy to be accepted as a disciple by the great *Yogi*. Being of a devotional temperament, he was like Nripatnath satisfied that he was blessed with the rare privilege of dedicating his life to the service of an ideal *yogi* habitually dwelling in the supramundane plane. Nripatnath was pleased to accept him as his brother and share with him the good fortune of serving the *Mahá-yogi*. After about fifteen years of devoted service both of them were one after the other formally initiated by Bábá Gambhirnath and accepted as his disciples. He had then passed the stage of *sádhaná* and attained *jivanmukta* state.

Thus the *Mahá-yogi* Bábá Gambhirnath went on peacefully and comfortably with his deep meditation, with Nripatnath as his body-guard, Suddhanath as Nripatnath's assistant in his service and the Akku brothers contributing to his physical comforts under the direction of the Nath-brothers. The Naths were not allowed to stay always near him. They constructed for their residence a small hut by the side of the hill and on a lower level. This quarter was known as Kharpar-Bhairab. They would come to him for making arrangements as often as they thought necessary. At this time also the *Yogiraj* had his stony seat generally under the open sky, sometimes under the shade of a tree and rarely in some natural cave.

In course of a short period people taking interest in spiritual matters gradually came to know that a very great *Mahátmá* was residing on the Kapildhárá hill and passing day and night under the open sky. It is quite possible that some stories about his miraculous powers were also transmitted from mouth to mouth. Some great saints of high spiritual attainments who were engaged in meditation in the adjacent hills paid occasional visits to him in secret. *Siddha* (self-realised) *Mahápurusas,* with spiritual sympathy for sincere *sádhakas* devoted to higher spiritual discipline, often come to them of their own accord to render help to them and rectify any mistake they may commit in their practices. The saints, who have attained the *jivanmukta* state (the state of liberation in this earthly life), sometimes enjoy supreme bliss in each other's company. But they move in such a way that their movements may not attract the attention of ordinary people. It is the *sádhus* of the higher orders that are now and then blessed with their sight and are able to recognise them. People come to know of them through these *sádhus.* The leaking out of such stories in connection with Bábá Gambhirnath raised him immensely in the estimation of the people. They gradually began to approach him for *darśan.* The ascetics who were engaged in *sádhaná* here and there in the hills of Gaya began to come to him at night, in the hope that meditation in close proximity to the *Mahápuruṣa* would easily become deep and ascend to higher planes.

Though Bábá Gambhirnath paid little attention to those who came and went, and his meditation was too deep to be disturbed by changes in the environments, still the place was no more as solitary as it had been. Bábá Nripatnath, who was his bodyguard, sometimes assumed the appearance of a *Bhairab* and tried to frighten away the people by awkward gestures. He would now and then severely reproach the people who assembled, sometimes he would even pelt stones at those who were found ascending the hill. All these were not of course to the liking of his Master, for whose sake he went out of his

way to take these steps. Though at heart he was full of love for all, specially for the sincere admirers of his Master, he would not tolerate the least inconvenience that might be caused to the Master's *sádhaná* by the concourse of people. He would try his best to preserve the purity of the atmosphere and the solitariness of the locality. Still it was difficult to prevent the incoming of the people. Bábá Gambhirnath sometimes retired to the dense forests to avoid the crowd. He would perhaps have been compelled to abandon this place of his choice, but for an interesting incident which solved the problem of solitude and kept him there.

A rich *pándá* (priest in a place of pilgrimage) of Gaya, named Madholal, became at this time involved in a serious law-suit. To lose the case would mean virtually the loss of his property and the destruction of all prospects in life. But as the circumstances stood, he had very little chance of success. In such a crisis worldly-minded people naturally seek for supernatural aid, and their faith in, reverence for and self-surrender to the deities and men possessing miraculous powers increase a thousandfold. The name of Bábá Gambhirnath and stories about his superhuman *tapasyá* (austerities) and extraordinary spiritual powers had already reached his ears from various sources. Madholal humbly placed himself at the feet of the great *Yogi* and prayed for his mercy. The *Yogiraj* had never consciously given the slightest indication of his possessing any *yogic* occult power. He never claimed any power for performing miracles. Except casting an occasional compassionate look at him, the *Yogiraj* gave no response to his prayers. Madholal became humbler still and began to serve him like a menial servant. He begged the mercy of all his attendants. He offered his services to the other *sádhus* and made liberal charities to the poor. He adopted all means, which might make him worthy of the mercy of God and the saint.

One day Bábá Gambhirnath, in response to his piteous importunities, blessed him saying, "It will be all right" (*áchchhá*

hi hogá), and asked him not to be sad. These simple words of blessing inspired Madholal with great hopes. Only a few days remained before the case would be taken up by the High Court for final disposal. Most unexpectedly Madholal gained the case. Whatever might have influenced the decision of the Court, Madholal was perfectly convinced that it was the will-power of the great *Yogi* which really won the victory for him. He thought that he owed his entire property to the *Yogiraj*. His body and mind were sufficiently purified by the devoted services he had rendered to the saint. After his success in the law suit, the interested motives behind his services were gone. He now went on serving him quite disinterestedly with the pure spirit of reverence and worship.

Madholal expressed his strong desire to construct a *yoga-guhá* for the *Yogiraj's* undisturbed meditation. The *Yogiraj's* permission being obtained, instruction was sought for as to the site and plan of the *guhá*. In a few words, the *Yogiraj* gave necessary instructions with regard to the site, the shape, the size and the nature of the *guhá* in accordance with *Yoga-śástra*. Madholal had the *guhá* constructed accordingly. It was an under-ground construction. The particular part of the hill was excavated to suit the requirements. Within the hollow, two small compartments were made—one outer and the other inner. A very small door for entrance and exit was kept in front of the outer compartment. There was a hole for creeping from the outer to the inner compartment, and the hole could be stopped. It was so arranged that no noise from outside might reach the inner compartment. Outside the *guhá* a cemented altar was made on the surface of the hill. A *Bel* tree was planted in the middle of the altar. Some *trisuls* (sanctified tridents) also were fixed on the altar. In the four corners of the altar, four *ásans* (seats) were placed.

This *yoga-guhá* being constructed, the problem of solitude was solved, and there now remained no inconvenience in the

way of *Yogiraj's* being immersed in the deepest meditation as long as he liked at a stretch and dwelling continually in the highest spiritual plane. He now began to pass the greater portion of the day and the night in the inner compartment of the *guhá* and to spend an hour or two outside on the altar. It was during this short period that people could have his *darśan.* Sometimes he was so deeply absorbed in meditation within the *guhá*, that he did not come out of it at any period of the day and the night. The *sevaks* (attendants) would wait outside with food and drink, not knowing when he would awake from his trance and feel inclined to come out. After some time he was found coming out for a short while on every alternate day, then on only two days in the week. Then he made it a rule that he would remain always within the *guhá* and would appear outside for a few hours every Tuesday in the evening. It was then arranged that the *sevaks* should keep a small quantity of milk—about half a pound—in the outer compartment of the *guhá*, and that he would drink it when he would feel the necessity for it. Even the *sevaks* were not entitled to enter or peep into the inner compartment while he was absorbed in meditation herein, nor to call him from outside. Throughout the week he was within the *guhá*, he felt no necessity for evacuation of the bowels or the kidney.

Probably as a result of the determination he might have made at the time of entering the *guhá*, he felt instinctively inclined to come out at the proper time every Tuesday just before dusk. By this time his fame as a superordinary *Mahápuruṣa* had spread far and wide. Every Tuesday evening a large number of people assembled there in front of the altar with the eagerness to be blessed with the *darśan* of the *Mahátmá.* Many of them brought flowers and fruits and sweets as offerings to the godly man. Many came with mental prayers for attaining some objects of ambition or getting rid of some difficulties. Some came with the sole purpose of increasing their spiritual wealth. There were among them ascetics as well as house-

holders, rich men of high positions as well as poor men of the humble villages. *Yogiraj* Gambhirnath came out of the *guhá* in a state of half-trance and took his seat on the altar under the *trisuls*. He appeared to be sitting on the border line between the sensible phenomenal world and supersensible spiritual world. His tall and majestic physique shone with the halo of the spiritual light that was burning within. A ray of smile, indicative of his internal self-enjoyment and of his love and mercy for all, radiated from his steady half-closed eyes. Scarcely did he ever utter any words. But his very presence created an atmosphere of peace and joy and hope, and exercised a holy spiritual influence upon the mental disposition and outlook of all. He sometimes recognised the salutations of the people and conferred blessings on them by slightly raising his right hand. He cast a smiling look upon the offerings, made a slight gesture of acceptance and signed to the *sevaks* to distribute them among the people assembled. Having thus blessed the people with his presence for an hour or two he would again retire to his *guhá* for a week.

He continued in this way for about three years. Then he made it a rule that he should come out once every fortnight in *Amábasyá* (New moon day) and *Purnimá* (Full-moon day). After that he used to come out only once a month. During all these periods, the other arrangements remained the same. His food consisted of only half a pound of milk, which was put in the outer compartment of the *guhá*. There was no necessity for clearance of the bowels and the kidney. The people eagerly waited for the day when he would make his holy appearance on the altar and bestow his blessings on them. Though he had no message to give them by word of mouth, his phyiscal presence itself would bring to them the noble message of a world, which was absolutely free from all cares and anxieties, all competitions and rivalries, all fears and hatreds, all bereavements and disappointments, all sorrows and disgusts, and the entire atmosphere of which was saturated with eternal

calmness and tranquillity, universal love and friendliness, absolute peace and bliss.

Reckoning from the commencement of his *sádhaná* in the *guhá*, he continued for about twelve years in this systematic process. At last he once entered the *guhá* and did not come out at the expected time. Full three months passed and he did not get out from the inner apartment. The *sevaks* were apprehensive as to whether he would come out again or continue in that state of the deepest meditation till *mahásamádhi* (perfect state of liberation from the body) was attained. After three months, however, he made his appearance outside the *guhá*. This was, as far as could be inferred from his outward conduct, the end of his voluntarily planned and designed *sádhaná*. After this, there was no definite rule with regard to his staying within or outside the *guhá*. The difference between the outer and the inner perhaps vanished from his consciousness at this stage. He attained the *abadhuta* state, for which he had been so eagerly endeavouring. He now attained the stage in which he could enjoy the bliss of trance in the waking state, he could be in undisturbed communion with the Absolute even while holding conversations about worldly matters with worldly people.

CHAPTER VII

A PEEP THROUGH THE VEIL

(A PEEP INTO THE METHOD OF HIS SADHANA)

No biographer can possibly give a detailed account of the technical processes and methods of spiritual self-discipline adopted by a *yogi* for the realisation of his supreme Ideal, the trials and difficulties faced by him at different stages of his spiritual journey and the diverse ways and means he takes recourse to for getting over them, or the inner joys and sorrows, the peculiar feelings and impulses, the occult visions and miraculous occurrences experienced by him at particular stages of his self-development. This most important chapter in the life of a true *yogi* always remains in darkness. This is true of all the greatest religious teachers of the world. We admire and adore and follow them after their lives are illumined by Divine Light, but know very little of the specific ways and means by which they made themselves worthy of it. The details of the course of *sádhaná* and the heartening and disheartening experiences through which a *yogi* ascends step by step to the stage of Truth-realisation and perfect self-enjoyment remain necessarily a close secret to himself. The inquirers can know just as much or as little as it pleases him to divulge in course of his instruction to others.

Gambhirnath's profound silence about his own efforts and attainments, even when he accepted the position of a religious teacher, was impregnable. Even in his ordinary talk, he seldom used 'the first person singular number.' From the trend of his instruction to those who sincerely and earnestly sought his guidance to advance in the path of spirituality and from

the evidence of some other saints who had got the rare privilege of seeing and listening to him occasionally during the period of *sádhaná*, we could form only a general idea of the modes of his self-discipline,—the *yogic* methods adopted by him for the satisfaction of his spiritual urge.

Gamhbirnath was initiated into the *yoga*-system of the *Nath-yogi* school founded by Gorakhnath. He always referred to himself as a humble follower and servant of Gorakhnath and believed with others that Gorakhnath was an incarnation of S'iva. He never parted with the distinctive symbols of the sect, such as the *Kundals* (rings) in his ears and the *Náda* on his breast. There is no evidence that he ever approached any religious teacher belonging to any other school to adopt any other method of spiritual discipline. From this it can be reasonably asserted that Gambhirnath's methods of *sàdhanà* were principally, if not exclusively, based upon the *yoga*-system of Gorakhnath.

Now, Gorakhnath's *yoga*-system is a comprehensive system of spiritual culture, consisting of (1) a system of ethical and social discipline, (2) a system of devotional and ceremonial worship, and (3) a system of forcible regulation, control and suppression of physical, vital and mental functions and development of occult powers of the body, the senses and the mind, as well as (4) a system of philosophical Truth-seeking and progressive Truth-realisation. Bábá Gambhirnath used to lay emphasis upon each of these aspects of *yoga*; but he cautioned his lay disciples against injudiciously adopting the third aspect, since it required special bodily and mental equipments, expert guidance and exclusive devotion to the practices for a long period under favourable environmental conditions. He himself had gone through all these courses of discipline. He was by nature equipped with a body and a mind specially fitted for the practice of esoteric *yoga*. Perhaps on account of his advancement in the path of *yoga* in his previous birth, he was born in this life with extraordinary physical and mental

equipments and an intense inner urge for reaching the end of this path. Perhaps for the same reason his progress in *yoga*-practice was extraordinarily rapid.

He had renounced his home and society and entered the monastery at Gorakhpur with such an intense aversion (*vairágya*) to worldly interests and such a burning zeal for God-realisation that he got rid of all unholy desires and moral impurities almost without any conscious efforts. The practice of *Yama* and *Niyama* in their negative as well as positive aspects was almost natural with him. Veracity and love, harmlessness and greedlessness, continence and celebacy, straightforwardness and fearlessness, patience and perserverance, contentment in worldly concerns and indomitable determination for spiritual self-fulfilment, capacity for under-going all sorts of hardship for a noble cause and undaunted faith in the ultimate success of earnest and sincere efforts—all these moral virtues which qualify a person for the practice of esoteric *yoga* were found to be adequately developed in his character even during the period he was at the Gorakhnath Temple in the company of his *Guru* and the other ascetics. Along with these he had a deeply devotional attitude. He had an inborn reverence for the gods and goddesses worshipped for centuries and millenniums in the Hindu society, and was a staunch believer in the efficacy of the forms of worship prescribed in the authoritative scriptures.

Even in the earliest stage of his *sádhaná* his spiritual ideas were sufficiently refined and developed so as to look upon all gods and goddesses as the diversified manifestations with diverse names and forms of the same Supreme Deity—the one non-dual Lord and Self of the universe—*Iśwara, Paramátmá, Brahma.* The idea of the absolute unity of Godhead along with the belief in the plurality of the Divine manifestations is prevalent in the mental atmosphere of the Hindu society, and every Hindu boy or girl imbibes it without any book-learning or philosophical speculation. A truth-seeker impelled by inner spiritual urge

directs his attention and energy more and more intensely towards the realisation of the unity of the Divine and becomes more and more indifferent to the plurality of names and forms in which He phenomenally manifests Himself. But a Hindu *sádhaka*, even in his highest stages of spiritual enlightenment, does not altogether ignore them or look upon them with any attitude of hostility or contempt. He offers homage to the same Absolute Spirit in all the diverse names and forms and in the diverse methods prescribed by the Sàstras. The members of the *Nath-yogi* sect are taught from the very beginning to worship the one God—the non-dual Absolute Spirit—with devotion and love in the forms of various Deities, in the images of Gods and Goddesses, in the symbols of various Powers and Forces operating in and regulating the phenomena of nature and also as the formless Idea of the Supreme Spiritual Reality.

Bábá Gambhirnath learnt in the very initial stage of his *sádhaná* to cultivate whole-hearted love and devotion and reverence to the supremely good, true and beautiful, supremely just, loving and merciful, Omnipotent, Omniscient and Omni-present Absolute Spirit,—the Creator, Preserver, Ruler and Destroyer of countless finite beings and the immortal Soul of them all. He practised sincere prayer, service and worship to Him in the forms of embodied Deities, bodiless Powers or Spirits, glorified Spiritual Ideas and also as the all-pervading Spiritual Personality. He observed the rules of ceremonial worship with intense longing for spiritual advancement; he sought for direct touch with the Spirit within and behind the forms and embodiments; he wanted to derive the utmost spiritual benefit from the external modes of worship. Formal and ritualistic worship was to him a necessary step for the purification of the body and the mind, for the cultivation of personal relationship with the Supreme Spirit, for the development of love, devotion and the spirit of service to the Lord, and for the intensification of the feeling that the Lord of the Universe is so near to us, so accessible even to our senses, so

responsive to our sentiments and so merciful and affectionate to His creatures.

While recognising the efficacy of formal and ritualistic worship and himself practising it in the earlier stages of his *sádhaná* for the cultivation of *bhakti* or love and devotion to the Divine, Bábá Gambhirnath laid special stress upon *japa* and *dhyána*, *i.e.* inaudibly repeating the Divine Name and contemplating on its spiritual significance. In after-life he used to enjoin upon the seekers of *bhakti* several forms of *japa*, each of which he had evidently practised himself. This *japa* is included in and constitutes the most important factor of *Mantra-yoga*. First, some sacred Name of the Divinity,—S'iva, Káli, Krishna, Hari, Ráma, Bhagaban, Básudeva, Paramátmá, Brahma or any other name,—may be taken from the *Guru*, who dynamises the Name with his own spiritual power and transmits it through the ears to the inner heart of the disciple. The Name is generally imparted in such a form as to involve the true conception of the Divine and to imply the true relation of the *sádhaka* to Him. By the addition of some appropriate word or words with the Name, it is as a rule converted into a *mantra* or mystic formula, which conveys the meaning that the *sádhaka* has to aim at surrendering himself,—his, 'me' and 'mine'—wholly to, and thereby inwardly identify himself with, the Divine Spirit, Who is the Self of his self, the Ruler of his destiny, the Lord of his body, mind and soul, the Creator, Sustainer and Destroyer of the Universe, the most perfect Ideal of Truth, Beauty, Goodness, Purity, Love and Bliss.

The *mantra* has to be inwardly repeated and its inner significance continually impressed upon the heart and intellect. If this sort of *japa* can be practised day after day *with every breath*, as Bábá Gambhirnath used to teach, it was enough for spiritualising and divinising the entire being of the *sádhaka* and identifying his individual ego with the Divine Self. It is recorded in the teachings of the illustrious religious teacher and reformer of Bengal, Mahátmá Vijoykrishna Goswami, that

he had first obtained the lesson on "*Náma-japa with every breath*" from Bábá Gambhirnath and experienced the wonderful efficacy of this process in his own life.

Bábá Gambhirnath taught some of his disciples the same *sádhaná* in another form, a form which is called *Ajapá* in the *Yoga-śástras*. It is said that a man naturally breathes in and breathes out twentyone thousand and six hundred times in course of every twentyfour hours. This natural process of in-breathing and out-breathing has been interpreted by the *yogis* as *jiva's* (the human self's) drawing the universe or the Universal Self into itself and its going out into universe and unifying itself with the Universal Self. It is imagined that the self of the *sádhaka* goes out with the sound *ham* (meaning *aham* or I or ego) to merge itself in the *Viswátma* or *Paramátmá* (the Universal Self or Supreme Spirit), and comes in again with the sound *Sa* (meaning He or the Universal Self or Supreme Spirit), bringing as it were the Universal Self into itself. Thus, it is held, a natural attempt is continuously going on through each breath for the unification of the inner with the outer, the part with the whole, the individual with the Universal, the ego tied to the body with the eternally liberated Spirit, the differentiated phenomenal consciousness with the all-comprehending noumenal consciousness. A *sádhaka* is instructed to pay attention to each breath and to contemplate on its spiritual significance. Without any effort for the forcible suppression or subjugation or lengthening of the natural breathing function, a *sádhaka* is only to see that no breath passes unnoticed and to attempt at remembering and feeling the unity between himself and the all-pervading Divinity, which truth each breath mutters to his heart. This *Ajapa-yoga* appeared to be very dear to Bábá Gambhirnath. He sometimes echoed the sentiment expressed by Gorakhnath himself in his *Goraksha-śataka*, *viz.* that "no other *vidyá* (knowledge), no other *japa*, no other *jnána* (insight) could be compared with this *ajapá!* As the result of the continued and steady practice of *ajapá*, the truth

of the unity of the self with *Brahman*—of *Jiva* with *Śiva*—is realised in spiritual experience, all lust, hatred, malice, fear, anxiety and restlessness disappear, and the bliss of consciousness of self-fulfilment is enjoyed within the heart."

A third form of *Japa-yoga* also appeared to have been favourite with Bábá Gambhirnath and must have been carefully practised by him. According to the *Yoga-śástra*, there is in the inner most core of the human heart a continuous, unbroken, unproduced sound of *Om* (*Pranava*) which is regarded as the vocal embodiment of *Brahma*. This is called *Anáhata-Náda* (*i.e.* sound which is not produced through the stroke of one thing against another, which is not of the nature of the vibration of the gross air, which is not broken into parts, which has no rise and fall, origination and destruction). It is believed to be the manifested presence of *Brahma* or the Absolute Spirit in Sound-form (*S'abda-Brahma*) in the heart of each *Jiva*. What is in the *Pinda* (the individual body) is also in the *Brahmánda* (the Universe). In the heart of the universe also a similar *Anáhata-Náda,—Náda-Brahma* or *S'abda-Brahma*—is eternally present. The *Náda* in the heart of the individual is essentially identical with the *Náda* in the heart of the universe, both being the manifestation of the Absolute Spirit in the form of one eternal tranquil Sound (the flute of Sri Krishna). It is from this self-revealing infinite and eternal Sound that all transitory, diversified sounds are originated, and it is in this Sound that all of them are ultimately merged. This *Anáhata Omkára* —this unoriginated, undifferentiated, immortal, all-comprehensive sweet sound of *Om* (*Pranava*)—is the eternal Name of Brahma and is identical with Him. Perfect absorption of the mind in this *Anaháta-Náda* leads to the realisation of Brahma.

A *sádhaka* aspiring for God-realisation is required to concentrate his attention upon *Anáhata-Náda*, which is at first only vaguely conceived and theoretically assumed to be present in the heart. He has to make an intense search for this *Náda*, and this is called *Nadánusandhána*. He has to discover and

realise it in the innermost core of the heart. The heart being the seat of desires, impressions of the past deeds and the egoising faculty, which create various kinds of vibrations and turmoils, the *Náda* cannot be listened to and experienced in the normal conditions of life. These have to be overcome by steady and prolonged practice, a calm and pure atmosphere has to be brought about within the body and the mind, a continuous flow of attention has to be directed towards the subtle music of the *Náda*, in order that this *Náda*—this sound-manifestation of the Supreme Lord—may be an object of direct experience. If it is experienced within one's own heart, it can be experienced in the heart of the universe as well.

As an effective help in the search for and concentration upon the *Náda*, *Pranava-japa* is sometimes resorted to. Steady and lengthened utterance of *Pranava* (such as, O-O-O-m-m-m), in something like imitation of the *Anáhata-Náda*, with the eyes and ears carefully closed, and cultivation of attention upon this sound, is highly useful in this process of *sádhaná*. For the purpose of hearing the internal sound, the *sádhaka* must begin with shutting out the external sounds from entering into his ears and filling up the outer atmosphere, so far as he is concerned, with the sweet monotonous *Pranava-sound* (uttered by himself) analogous to the internal *Anáhata-Náda*. The stillness of night, the silence of lonely forests and mountain caves, etc. are favourable for the practice. When the *sádhaka* becomes an adept in the practice, he can create stillness for himself even in the midst of a tumultuous crowd by the power of his abstraction and concentration.

But the obstacles come not only from outside, but also from within the body. When external sounds are shut out and the mind seeks for the *Náda* within, he hears within himself step by step a great variety of sounds, such as those of drums and thundering clouds, those of small bells and conches, those of the buzzing of black bees and the music of the flute and the violin, etc. But the seeker for the *Anáhata-Náda* must not stop at

any such step. He must show indifference to all these experiences, however delightful, and must push on his search through deeper and deeper concentration of his attention. All such experiences and the pleasures arising from them, and even the occult powers that may develop in course of the practice, must be regarded as distractions. These being transcended, the mind ultimately comes in direct contact with the *Anáhata-Náda* and becomes illumined by the Truth embodied in it. To attain steadiness and stability at this stage requires prolonged practice, otherwise the tumults of the world may again push this experience to the background. When the mind is at home with the *Anáhata Náda*, the entire universe becomes a sweet stream of spiritual music to its experience. Whatever is heard in this world sounds as a particular note of that music. Through deeper meditation the mind is thoroughly unified with the *Náda*, which is essentially identical with Brahma, the Absolute Spirit.

This *Náda-yoga*, which is a magnificent form of *Japa-yoga*, occupies a very important place in the system of *sádhaná* propounded by the teachers of the *Náth-yogi* sect, and Bábá Gambhirnath was known as a perfect adept in this form of spiritual discipline.

As to how far Bábá Gambhirnath practised the intricate processes of *Hatha-yoga*, it is very difficult for us to gauge. That he established perfect control over his physical, vital and mental functions was recognised by all persons who had some amount of insight into such things. But how far this was the result of his *Bhakti-sádhaná* and *Jnána-sádhaná*—the practice of devotion to the Lord, *japa* of His Name, absolute self-surrender to Him, deep meditation on His transcendent and all-pervading character and the perfect realisation of the ultimate Truth about the self, the universe and the Supreme Lord,—and how far this was accomplished through the practice of *Hatha-yoga*, no definite opinion can be passed on this point. Among the great contemporary saints, who could be expected

to form their judgment on the basis of some deeper spiritual insight, there was a concensus of opinion that Bábá Gambhirnath was an ideal *yogi*—one who reached the highest stage of self-fulfilment in the path of *yoga*. Even before Bábá Gambhirnath came to light as a teacher and radiator of spirituality, Mahátmá Bijoykrishna Goswami, a great religious teacher of deep spiritual insight and established fame, used to refer to him, saying, "Here was a *yogi*, who had acquired through his extraordinary *yogic* culture the Divine power of creating, controlling and destroying this world in the twinkling of an eye, and who having reached the highest stage of knowledge (*jnána*), power (śakti) and lordliness (*aiśvarya*) was now living in the world as the perfect embodiment of love and peace and sweetness (*mádhurya*)."

Yoga, in the restricted sense, as expounded by Gorakhnath and his illustrious followers, consists principally of six limbs (*ṣaṭ anga*), *viz.* *ásana* (steadiness of posture), *pránáyáma* (control of the vital airs), *pratyáhára* (withdrawal of the senses and the mind from worldly objects), *dháraná* (concentration of the mind upon chosen ideals or objects of pursuit), *dhyána* (continued meditation) and *samádhi* (trance or self-identification with the Ideal). These are practised by all earnest *yogis*, and there can be no doubt that Gambhirnath passed through all these processes. These six processes constitute the six organs of one organic system, which is called *yoga-sádhaná*, and the whole system is meant for the realisation of the ultimate Ideal of life, *viz.* complete liberation from all sorrow, bondage and limitation through the spiritualisation of the entire being of the *sádhaka* and the immediate experience of the unity of the individual self with the Supreme Spirit,—of *Jiva* with *S'iva*. Since all the steps are directed towards one ultimate Ideal, the ultimate value of each step is to be determined by its contribution to the process of realisation of that Ideal, and the utility and efficacy of each earlier step is to be measured by its necessity for and assistance to the practice of the later steps. Accordingly,

ásana has to be practised with a view to the practice of *pránáyáma*, *pratyáhára*, *dháraná*, *dhyána* and *samádhi*, since health and steadiness of the body are necessary for successfully practising these higher processes. Similarly, *pránáyáma* or the control of internal organs, the nervous system and the vital functions through the proper regulation of the breathing processes, has to be practised for the purpose of making the entire psycho-physical organism eminently fit for the cultivation of the higher forms of *dháraná*, *dhyána* and *samádhi*. *Pratyáhára* or the withdrawal of the senses and the mind from all transitory objects of natural desires should be practised, not for its own sake, not merely for making the mind vacant and unworldly, but for the acquisition of greater and greater capacity to concentrate the attention upon the supreme spiritual Truth,—upon the ultimate object of human life. *Dháraná*, *dhyána* and *samádhi* have their intrinsic values in *yoga-sádhaná*, if and when they make the Ultimate Truth, the Supreme Spirit, the object of concentration, meditation and self-absorption. These are not three different processes. *Dháraná*, when it becomes deep enough and continues uninterruptedly for any length of time, is developed into *dhyána* and when *dhyána* becomes through practice so deep that the consciousness of the difference between the subject and the object vanishes, no conscious effort for the realisation of Truth remains, the self becomes wholly absorbed in the direct intuition of the object of its quest and feels itself identified with the Latter, it is then developed into *samádhi*.

Dháraná, *dhyána* and *samádhi*, in order to accomplish the purpose of true *yoga* and to liberate the human soul completely from ignorance, sorrow, bondage and limitation, presuppose the conception of the Supreme Spirit, the Absolute Reality, the Ultimate Truth of the self and the universe. This conception must be acquired through careful *vichára* (metaphysical reasoning) based upon the instruction of the *Guru* and the recorded realisations of the Truth-seers of ancient and modern times. The conception formed through *vichára* is converted

into direct intuition or realisation through *dháraná*, *dhyána* and *samádhi*, in as much as through the prolonged practice of these highest forms of self-discipline the phenomenal consciousness which is the seat of realisation becomes perfectly pure and tranquil and transparent, and the self-luminous Truth reflects upon it its own transcendent eternal character and illumines its entire nature. *Samádhi*, unless based upon and supported by *vichára*, is not a safe guide to Truth, because concentration may be practised upon wrong notions; and *vichára* also without *samádhi* cannot lead to the direct realisation of Truth, because owing to impurity and fickleness, consciousness may not thoroughly identify itself with Truth and remain absorbed in it.

Bábá Gambhirnath as a sincere and earnest truth-seeker must have planned his whole course of *yoga-sádhaná* with a view to the direct realisation of the Absolute Truth and perfect self-absorption in it. Accordingly he must have paid far greater attention to systematic *vichára* or rational reflection on the nature of Truth, which, as he used to say afterwards, constituted the essence of *Rája-yoga*, and to *dháraná*, *dhyána* and *samádhi* for making the Truth perfectly his own and being absolutely absorbed (*leena*) in it. The practice of *vichára* and *vairagya* and *dhyána* and *samádhi* appeared to have occupied the central position of his *yoga-sádhaná*. So much could be definitely inferred from what fell from his lips in course of his instruction to disciples.

But Truth-realisation or Self-realisation or God-realisation does not necessarily imply the acquisition of such occult or miraculous powers,—such control over the forces of nature, such supersensuous vision of the past and the future and the remote facts of the phenomenal world, such capacity to create wonders and accomplish superhuman deeds, etc.—as were attributed to Bábá Gambhirnath by the contemporary saints and admirers, who had opportunities of closely observing him and who had competency to form a true estimate of his inner

character. Though he very rarely gave any outward expression to his occult powers, these few and exceptional occasions were enough to demonstrate to the close observers that he possessed them in an immense degree. What was most striking and beautiful in his character was,—so said many renowned religious teachers,—that not only had he acquired powers to govern all the forces of nature and to reconstruct the world, as it were, in a new form, if he so liked, but that he had also attained the wisdom and power to keep all these occult powers under his complete control and to put them in tune with the sweet current of events as ordained by the eternal Lord of all *yogis*. His will being identified with the will of the Lord, his mind and heart being surrendered in wisdom and love to the universal Mind and Heart, he always enjoyed the beauty of the course of events in the Lord's universe, and was never perturbed by the apparent hideousness or distressfulness of the particular phenomena happening near about him so as to wish them to be otherwise and exert any effort of his will for altering their course. During the last years of his life, when he was surrounded by disciples and admirers, the latter would sometimes draw his compassionate attention to the undesirable events near about him and beg for his intervention. On such occasions he was heard to reply in his characteristic gentle tone—"Should I revolt against the decree of the Lord ?" But on exceptional occasions love and compassion appeared to prevail over his attitude of disinterested spectatorship with regard to the Lord's play in His universe, and the will which he exerted and expressed, of course as the instrument of the Lord, seemed to others to produce miraculous results. However, the pious truthseeking people who came in close contact with him as well as the saints who had the spiritual insight to penetrate into what lay hidden behind his perfectly quiescent body and mind were equally convinced and equally unhesitating in their proclamation that Bábá Gambhirnath was in possession of "infinite *yogic* powers."

Some of the so-called occult powers are developed in the normal course of spiritual progress by virtue of the concentration and refinement of the physical and psychical energy, which has to be practised by every spiritual aspirant, whether he adopts the path of *bhakti* or the path of *jnána* or the path of *yoga* (in the restricted sense). There are many powers which are latent in every man, but of which an ordinary man is not generally conscious, because they are scattered away into diverse wrong channels by the desires and passions which ordinarily influence the activities of men. If the desires and passions are checked, truth and purity in thought, speech and action is carefully cultivated, the physical and mental energy is concentrated deliberately upon some chosen objects, and self-restraint is exercised in all the affairs of life, the powers of will and thought are then immensely increased and they become sometimes capable of performing deeds which to ordinary worldly men would appear to be wonderful or miraculous or supernatural. With spiritual progress these powers become more and more free from bondage and restriction, more and more irresistible to the external forces, more and more refined and illumined, and at certain stages they are looked upon by ordinary men as transcending and superseding the laws of phenomenal nature. These supernatural powers, manifested in the forms of occult vision and miraculous action, are in fact nothing but natural powers inherent in the human soul, which are ordinarily unmanifested, but which are unfolded and revealed when the obstacles are removed.

But there are many occult powers or *vibhutis*, which are not manifested without specific *yogic* practices. In the *Yoga-śástras* various *yogic* processes are mentioned and described, successes in which lead to special *vibhutis*,—special forms of supernatural and superhuman powers and supersensuous and supramental knowledge. Gorakhnath and his *Hatha-yogi* followers greatly elaborated this aspect of *yoga*. They experimented upon and invented various kinds of *ásana* and

pránáyáma and *mudrá* and various practices by the combination of them. For the cultivation of deep concentration of physical and mental energy, for the attainment of perfect mastery over the body and the mind, for the development of various supernatural powers of knowledge and will, they practised and formulated many forms of *ásana*, *mudrá*, *bandha*, *pránáyáma*, *dháraná*, and *dhyána* and bore witness to the wonderful effects of these processes. For making the external and internal organs of the body and the nervous system perfectly healthy and pure and fit for the higher *yogic* processes, many auxiliary processes were prescribed and expounded with accurate details, such as *dhauti* (cleansing of the internal and external organs), *basti* (alternate contraction and expansion of certain muscles for cleansing the stomach and the intestines), *neti* (some process of cleansing the path by which the nose, the eyes, the ears and the throat are connected), *lauliki* (certain exercises of the belly), *trátaka* (certain processes of fixing the gaze upon subtle things and increasing the power of vision), *kapálabháti* (certain processes of removing the faults of *kapha* or mucous membranes), etc. Each of them has various forms. Through the practice of these, various powers are developed. Moreover, particular forms of *dháraná*, *dhyána* and *samádhi* —deep concentration of the mind upon particular kinds of objects—are said to unfold particular kinds of occult vision and miraculous powers.

The teachers of *yoga* tell us that there are processes of *yoga*, by which the *yogi* can become a perfect master of all the processes in the evolution of *Prakiti*,—he can at least theoretically acquire the power of creating and dissolving the world. There are processes by which a *yogi* can attain such intuitive insight as to see all things, all phenomena of the past, the present and the future, to listen to and understand the meanings of the sounds uttered by all living beings, even the smallest insects, to know directly the thoughts, feelings and desires of all creatures. This means that his inner consciousness becomes so amazingly free

from all bondages and limitations which are normally imposed upon it by time and space, by the special senses and the discursive reason, by desires, passions and prejudices, and by the habitual empirical modes of knowledge, that the *yogi* finds reflected truly upon his consciousness whatever he pays attention to and concentrates his thoughts upon. Since the individual consciousness is essentially in union with the universal Consciousness, Which pervades and illumines and objectifies all finite minds and material objects and events, the former has the inherent potentiality to be in direct touch with whatever is present to the Latter, and this potentiality is actualised through appropriate *yogic* practices. There are, it is asserted, *yogic* processes by which a *sádhaka* can conquer death, not only in the spiritual sense, but even in the empirical sense of immortalising the physical body; he can rise above the physical laws and forces and can spiritualise his whole physical existence.

Many contemporary saints and *yogis*, who themselves gave occasional expressions to various kinds of occult intuitions and powers, and charmed the wondering people thereby, freely acknowledged the superiority of Bábá Gambhirnath not only in point of spiritual self-fulfilment, but also in point of supernatural powers, *siddhis* or *vibhutis*. They asserted that Bábá Gambhirnath was a *yogi par excellence*, that he was not only a saint with perfect spiritual enlightenment, but also a perfect adept in special *yogic* practices with unfathomable powers for performing miracles, even for changing the courses of nature. We who could observe his life only from outside and from an empirical point of view have no competency either to confirm or to deny the evidences of those great persons with deep spiritual insight. Outwardly Bábá Gambhirnath was, at least in his later days when we had the opportunity of seeing him, a man of such profound silence and blissful calmness that hardly any expression of his supernatural powers and supersensuous visions could be noticed from outside. His *siddhis* or *vibhutis* were perhaps wholly digested and merged in the blissful

tranquillity of his spiritual self-realisation and the serene enjoyment of Divinity within himself.

Looking, however, into the modes of his conduct and reading between the lines of his teachings, even a lay man could have reasonably inferred that he had in some periods of his *sádhaná* devoted himself to the practice of *Hatha-yoga* and acquired many supernatural powers and experiences through it, and that having considered those powers and experiences not of much fundamental importance for the realisation of the Absolute Truth, he became relatively indifferent to those special exercises of *Hatha-yoga* and directed all the physical, vital and intellectual energy, which he had immensely dynamised and refined and made irresistible through them, to the attainment of the one Ideal of life, *viz.* the conscious unification of the self with the Eternal Infinite Blissful Absolute Sprit, the Ultimate Ground and Substance and Lord and Self of this diversified universe. With this highest end in view, he appears to have laid the greatest emphasis in the later stages of his spiritual self-discipline upon *tatwa-vichára* (deeper and deeper reflection upon the ultimate nature of the Absolute Truth), *tatwa-dhyána* (deeper and deeper meditation upon and self-absorption in what was determined to be the ultimate transcendent character of Truth) and *tatwa-samádhi* (perfect self-identification with the Absolute Truth in the plane of consciousness as well as in the plane of superconsciousness). Having reached the highest stage of *samádhi* and been blessed with the perfect realisation of the Truth, Beauty, Goodness, and Bliss of the eternal and infinite Divine Nature within himself, he again engaged himself in the practice of the noble spiritual art of bringing down the realisation of the highest plane of *samádhi* to the mental, the vital and the physical planes—the planes of normal behaviour in the diversified phenomenal world.

As a religious teacher he was reluctant to initiate his disciples into the technical practices of *Hatha-yoga*. One of his disciples had, before he came in direct contact with him, learnt and

practised several *Hatha-yogic* processes—*neti*, *dhauti*, *mudrá*, *bandha*, etc.—and acquired some occult powers also through them. In order to engage himself more deeply in the practice of the higher processes of *Hatha-yoga*, he approached Bábá Gambhirnath, who was reputed to be the greatest of *yogis* accessible to him and accepted him as his *Guru*. Bábá Gambhirnath told him with his characteristic calmness and gravity that he might be taught some such subtle processes of *Hatha-yoga*, by the systematic and successful practice of which he might acquire the occult powers of knowing the past and future, seeing the invisible realities, performing miracles and living in this body for a thousand years. He showed him some subtle processes of *shat-chakra-bheda* (piercing through the six *chakras* within the body and elevating the vital power to the highest spiritual plane, called *sahasrára*). Having given him some such instruction on the deeper *sádhaná* of *Hatha-yoga*, he added that such miraculous powers or *vibhutis* were insignificant for a sincere and earnest aspirant for God-realisation and perfect self-fulfilment. Hence, he added, instead of spending so much time and energy out of his limited store in attempts at acquiring such powers and glories, it would be advisable for him to devote himself to such culture as would lead directly to the perfection of the self and attainment of unity with God. The disciple submitted and gave up his old practices and long-cherished ambitions. The *Guru* initiated him into *Japa-yoga*, *Jnána-yoga* and *Dhyána-yoga* saying that if he could practise these without interruption, he would be able to reach the spiritual goal in this life.

One day, in course of his instruction to some of his disciples, he mentioned by the way that *Hatha-yoga* was not really concerned wholly or chiefly with the complicated exercise of the physical and the vital organs and the development of supernatural powers of the intellect and the will, but within it there were some practices (generally unknown to the ordinary votaries of the system) which were wonderfully efficacious for the

spiritual illumination of the entire being of the *sádhaka* and the realisation of the Ultimate Truth. But, he said, the physical and the mental equipments necessary for such practices were so rarely found and so few *yogis* of the present age were found to possess the amount of patience, steadiness, devotion and faith which they required, that these aspects of *Hatha-yoga* were almost going to be forgotten for want of culture. One of the disciples present, who had a robust physique and strong determination and who had already cut off his connection with his family for devoting himself wholly to spiritual culture, begged the *Guru* for initiation into those esoteric *Hatha-yogic* practices, however difficult, if of course he thought him worthy of them. Seeing his apparent earnestness, the *Guru* at first gave him an authoritative treatise on *Hatha-yoga* for his primary theoretical acquaintance with the system. Having gone over some portions of the book, the disciple in course of a few days lost his enthusiasm, stealthily left the book on the *Guru's* bed and did not repeat his offer to be initiated into *Hatha-yoga*. The *Guru*, who had from the beginning deeper insight into the inner nature of the disciple than the latter himself, remained silent and did not raise the point again. In accordance with the bent of his character and temperament, he instructed him on *Jnana-yoga*,—the path of the cultivation of spiritual knowledge.

Such incidents showed on the one hand that Bábá Gambhirnath had first-hand acquaintance with the most intricate processes of *Hatha-yoga* and fully enjoyed the fruits of these processes, and on the other hand they indicated that, in the highest stages of spiritual illumination, he did not feel much interested in them and did not consider them to be essential for Truth-realisation, which was the summum bonum of life. The cultivation of *bhakti* (Divine love) and *jnána* (Divine knowledge) was what he insisted upon in course of his instruction to the Truth-seekers.

CHAPTER VIII

AT THE JIVANMUKTA STAGE

The period of Bábá Gambhirnath's intense struggle for self-fulfilment may roughly be calculated to have been about thirty years. Of these the first few years he resided in the Gorakhnath Temple in the presence and under the direct guidance of his *Guru*, and this may be regarded as the period of his all round preparation for deeper *yoga-sádhaná*. His systematic *yoga*-practice began at Banaras. At Banaras and Jhunsi he spent about six or seven years, during which he practically cut himself off from the world and devoted himself entirely to a well-defined course of self-discipline, involving the cultivation of *bhakti*, *jnána* and *dhyána* along with the auxiliary processes for attaining mastery over the body, the senses and the mind. The next six or seven years he spent as a wandering ascetic, and during this period he placed himself under a variety of physical and environmental conditions, favourable as well as unfavourable, and must have struggled hard to keep the intensiveness of his spiritual quest and the even flow of his contemplation and meditation unaffected by the external vicissitudes. The last twelve or thirteen years he spent at a stretch at Kapildhárá, and this was the period of his most systematic, most intense and most uninterrupted *sádhaná* of the highest type.

As the result of this *sádhaná* he attained the highest state of spiritual experience and became a perfectly Divine man. His pursuit of Truth, his pursuit of Power, his pursuit of Beauty, his pursuit of Purity, his pursuit of Tranquillity, his pursuit of universal Love, his pursuit of absolute Bliss,—all his pursuits in which his *sádhaná* consisted, now reached their ultimate destination. He felt that his knowledge was perfect, his power

was unlimited, his love was boundless, his happiness was unalloyed, his purity was unadulterated, his calmness was undisturbed. He fully realised that these ideals, which appeared to be different from one another in the lower planes of pursuit, were really one in the plane of fulfilment, and that they were eternally unified in the glorious nature of the Divine, Who was not only the Creator and Ruler of the universe, but the true Self of all creatures, the true Substance of all things. He realised the Divinity in himself as well as the objective world. He felt himself as an embodiment of the Infinite Spirit and looked upon everything in the universe as a self-expression of the Absolute Being. Hence all the glorious ideals he sought for in his struggling life he found fully realised and unified in his true self. Accordingly he had nothing more to seek after, nothing more to exert his will or energy for, nothing more to attain or to renounce. He expereinced the same Reality, the same Spirit, in himself and in all objects. Hence he appeared as *Tranquillity Personified.*

Perfect tranquillity of the body, the senses and the mind was the outer manifestation of inner self-fulfilment. His consciousness was always in such a Divine plane, in such a plane of unity, peace, harmony, love and beauty,—that nothing, no change of outer circumstances, no kind of treatment received from outside, no happening in the environments or even in his own body, could create any form of agitation or disturbance in it. He had no sense of ego as separate from other egoes,—no sense of 'Me and Mine', and hence no sense of self-interest as distinct from the interests of others. The world was to him not a material world of competition and rivalry and fear and hatred, but a spiritual world of peace, harmony, love, unity and beauty. While seeing or hearing, speaking or moving, eating or drinking, he was really a witness to the all-pervading Deity, seeing or hearing or speaking or moving or eating or drinking through this particular embodiment of Himself. He enjoyed the activities of others and the phenomena of nature also from the

same centre of experience. He was neither the actor, nor the sufferer, nor the enjoyer, but it was the one Absolute Spirit that was manifesting Himself in all actions and enjoyments and sufferings. He was always in conscious union with that Absolute Spirit,—Śiva, Brahma—and looked upon all affairs of the world as the play of the Spirit, *lila* of Śiva, self-manifestation of Brahma. As an individual he had no special interest in anything. He did not even cherish the desire that something ought to be in preference to something that was.

His physical features and the expressions of his eyes and tongues and other limbs were so full of calmness and sweetness, so full of harmony and beauty, so full of love and compassion for all, that they appeared to visibly reflect his inner consciousness. They seemed to silently broadcast to this world the sweet message of unity and concord, universal love and brotherhood, eternal peace and bliss. His whole being radiated spirituality all around. He felt within himself no impulse of any unfulfilled mission, no desire to preach or to teach, no inclination to occupy the position of a religious teacher or spiritual guide, no craving for rendering any active service to others. But his very presence acted like a spiritual magnet and power-station. The spiritual light that was brilliantly shining within him appeared to invite to his side the people of the world suffering from ignorance, bondage and sorrow in order to illumine their consciousness and activise their potentialities. His eyes were almost always half-closed. Even in the midst of the crowd an unbroken stream of meditation appeared to be flowing on in his body and mind. His very appearance seemed to construct a beautiful bridge between the phenomenal and the spiritual worlds, between the everchanging diversities and the changeless unity.

Having attained this highest stage of spiritual life, Bábá Gambhirnath continued to live at the Kapildhárá hill for a few years. His presence there at that stage converted the lonely hill-tract gradually into a small *áśram* for *sádhus* and

a holy place of pilgrimage for men and women with spiritual hunger. Some small huts were constructed there. Though he accepted none as his disciple, people with sincere hankering for true religion were naturally attracted by his spiritual glory and flocked towards him to enjoy the bliss of his company and receive his speechless blessings. Some *sádhus* who had renounced the world for the purpose of spiritual advancement became eager to live in his proximity and to practise *yoga* under his direction. Thus an *áśram* grew there, and Madholal Panda and a few other admirers of Nathji bore the expenses.

We have already given a general idea of the way in which he lived in this world and dealt with the people. Here we mean to give a few concrete illustrations to make the idea a little clearer.

Nathji was found to have the habit—if the term habit can be appropriately used in his case—of smoking. When the habit was formed is not known to us. If it had been formed in the earlier stages of his *sádhaná*, we cannot imagine how it was preserved during the period of his practice of deep meditation, specially when he was day and night immersed in the state of trance for weeks together. However, in his *jivanmukta* state the mode of his smoking was a sight to see. As it has been stated, he was almost always found in a meditative mood with his eyes inwardly directed, with his face radiant with the glory of internal bliss, with his body motionless. There was no likelihood of his feeling at any time a thirst for smoking or any desire for anything. But his *bhaktas* and *sevaks* had the eagerness to serve him. They would prepare tobacco and put the *kalki* before him. But it would generally fail to attract his notice. His eyes might be half-open, but they were focussed upon something within. The smoking *kalki* could not divert his attention. It appeared to be waiting with warmth in eager expectation of the blessed touch of his fingers and lips for a few minutes. It would gradually lose hope and warmth and ultimately sad disappointment would turn it pale and cold.

The *sevak* was persevering. When his meditative mood was thought to be somewhat slackened, he would prepare another *kalki* of tobacco and take courage to put it into his fingers. The fingers might automatically take it, but the distance between it and the lips would not be shortened, because the mind being not present there could not co-operate in the matter. The process would be repeated for the third or the fourth time, because the *sevak* could not be satisfied till he could make his master taste the joy of smoking. Through such repeated efforts of the *sevak*, Nathji might on one occasion be brought down from his supramundane plane and made to put his lips upon the fingers containing the *kalki* and draw the smoke inwards. But the mind would immediately pass into the state of trance. The *kalki* within his fingers might go on emitting smoke in the close proximity of his nose. But where was he ? It seemed that though his physical body was softly breathing the atmosphere of the place, he himself passed far away from the world of diversities into the timeless and spaceless region of infinite peace and rest and unity.

Let us give another illustration. After his *sádhana* period, he was always found to be accompanied by some *sádhus*. The number sometimes increased and sometimes decreased. Among them there were men of different temperaments. Some were in sincere quest of the goal of spiritual life and they earnestly subjected themselves to systematic *yogic* discipline. There were others who had vanity, selfishness, malice, bigotry and narrowness of outlook and had no control over their temper. The observers from outside were struck with wonder that to Bábá Gambhirnath they were all equal, they were treated by him with the same waveless affection and mercy. Those who served him heart and soul, those who devoted themselves to *yogic* practices, and those who wasted a good deal of their time and energy in smoking and talking and quarrelling and sometimes seriously disturbed the peace of the *áśram*, found nothing even in his facial expression to show that he entertained different

kinds of feelings towards them,—that he was pleased with the conduct of some and disgusted with that of others.

It sometimes happened that the ill-bred and ill-tempered so-called *sádhus* forgot themselves so much that their quarrel developed into fighting. The holy and peaceful atmosphere, in which even the ferocious animals were not unoften observed to imbibe the spirit of non-violence and to respect the feelings and interests of men and other animals, sometimes failed to exert any effective influence upon the deep-rooted evil disposition of these human beings passing for *sádhus* and elated with the presumption of having renounced the world for the sake of spirituality. Such awkward incidents also could not disturb the even flow of meditation of *Yogiraj* Gambhirnath. After some ugly exhibition of the powers of evil operating within them, they usually became tired and humbled and placed themselves at the feet of the *Yogiraj*. The regained consciousness of the presence of the Divine Man made them ashamed of their inhuman conduct. He, instead of uttering any word of reproach, or showing any sign of disgust, would simply cast his eyes upon them with a look of charming compassion and sometimes add in almost a whispering tone that 'this was quite unbecoming of *sádhus*, that *sádhus* should be non-violent and have control over their temper and that they should not even think of doing any injury to others or cherish the memory of any injury done to them by others.' After this his eyes and lips almost automatically closed and he passed into the state of meditation again.

If any sincere *sádhu* or *bhakta* proposed that such ill-tempered men, who vitiated the moral and spiritual atmosphere of the locality, should be driven away from the *áśram* or from his company, *Yogiraj* Gambhirnath would in a word or two teach him the lesson that 'diseased minds like diseased bodies should be tended with affectionate care, and not hated or neglected or turned out of their shelter.' He would also hint that 'the Lord was the true Self of these men no less than of the saints

and that when it would please the Lord to exhibit Himself in His incorruptible perfect glory in them, all those apparent impurities on the surface of their minds would be washed away and they would shine in their true essential character as the beautiful embodiments of the Divine. To hate them or to feel disgust at their company would mean the recognition of the passing apparent features of their character as really true, and the ignorance or denial of the glorious presence of the Lord as their true self. See and appeal to the Divine in these persons, and the Lord must respond from within them. This would be the real moral and spiritual benefit of these men as well as of the observers.

When rich people began to pay visits to the *áśram* and supply articles for food, clothing and comfort to the *sádhus* who took shelter there, the attention of the thieves and pilferers also was directed towards it. For some time they caused some disturbance to the *sádhus*. They used to throw stones upon the huts at night and frighten the *sádhus*. They sought for opportunities to take away articles from the *áśram* or to rob the *sádhus* of their belongings. The incident of one night was thus described by Bábá Gakulnath, who was then residing there. He was sleeping outside a hut with a blanket on his body. A gang of thieves began to pelt stones, one of which hurt him. He awoke and cried out. Bábá Nripatnath and other *sádhus* came out. The thieves were about to fly away. But in the meantime *Yogiraj* Gambhirnath, on hearing the noise, moved out of his seat and gently approached the thieves. "Why do you throw stones and disturb the *sádhus* ?" The *Yogiraj* mildly and affectionately said to the thieves, "You may, if you like, take away whatever things you find in the *áśram*." At his command Bábá Nripatnath threw open the doors of the huts. The thieves were taken aback. They bowed down before the extraordinary *Yogi* and spoke of their poverty. The *Yogiraj* signed to them to take away whatever they needed. They took away the small quantities of rice and flour and *dál* they

found there, together with some blankets and utensils. While taking leave, they bowed again and asked for his blessings. Bábáji said in words full of compassion, "My boys, you are so poor, these articles are not at all adequate to meet your wants, but no help, you may again come here after a fortnight or so and you will get similar quantities of food. Don't uselessly oppress the people." The poor men appeared to get a new life. With heads hanging down they departed. Next morning Madholal came, and on hearing the report replaced the articles. Those people, suffering the pangs of poverty, came again to the *áśram*, but not as thieves or pilferers. There was a great change in their inner disposition, but they had no honest means of livelihood. The *Yogiraj* signed to Nripatnath to give away food, articles and blankets to them. They received these as his blessings. As a result of such behaviour to the habitual thieves and plunderers and rogues, a radical change was brought about in the lives of all such people of the surrounding locality. They became ashamed of their habits, gave them up and took to honest ways of life.

Bábá Gambhirnath appeared to those who came to him as the very embodiment of love, non-violence, sweetness and calmness. The few words that he spoke, the few actions that he performed, the few instructions that he imparted to the attendants, the few expressions that he gave to his feelings towards men and creatures appeared as the perceptible manifestátions of these qualities. His behaviour towards ferocious animals, terrible reptiles, unclean creatures and little insects also was saturated with love and sweetness. He was found to feed cats and rats with his own hand. He was noticed to serve serpents with milk. He was observed to fondle tigers and to give food to them. He never used silk-clothing, for the preparation of silk caused pain to the worms. All these he generally did in such a way as not to attract the curiosity of the people. But such actions could not always escape the notice of his attendants and visitors to whom they naturally appeared as

exceptional and through whose whisperings they got some amount of publicity.

It seemed that all living beings, whether men or beasts or birds or insects, that dwelt near his *áśram* or occasionally came to it, were his guests, and that it was his plain duty as the central figure in the *áśram* to serve all of them with cordial hospitality and to look after their physical necessities. In point of hospitality he set up an ideal, which every dutiful householder ought to follow. He pointed out that, according to the direction of the *śástras*, hospitality was a categorical imperative to all *áśram-dwellers*, whether the *áśram* be of a *brahmachari* or of a *grihastha* (householder) or of a *bánaprastha* (forest-dweller) or of a *sannyási* (mendicant). He also pointed out that hospitality should not be confined to respectable guests like Bráhmans and *sádhus* and other men of position, nor even to human beings in general, but that it should be extended to all creatures, because the Lord was the Self of them all. In offering hospitality, he taught, the consciousness of the presence of the Lord in the guests (whatever might be their outward appearance) should be kept awake and the services should be rendered with a pure heart and devotional attitude as at the time of worshipping the Lord. Within the small sphere of his *áśram-life*, Bábá Gambhirnath set up an example of this mode of conduct.

In this outward behaviour he appeared to show a little partiality towards the poor and depressed people. When such men and women offered any articles or any services to him, howsoever insignificant they might be, he would, unless he was immersed in meditation, usually accept them with a charming ray of divine smile on his face. When they made any prayers, or narrated their wants, distresses and bereavements, he seemed to listen to them with sympathetic interest and sometimes uttered a few words of consolation and advice. The articles which his comparatively rich admirers presented to him he generally distributed among the poor people. Sometimes he made his wealthy admirers feel 'that the merciful Lord

appeared in the guise of such poor and distressed men, women and children to receive their worship and to test the sincerity of their devotion, and that He was more pleased when the offerings of food, clothing and shelter were made to Him in the persons of such needy creatures than in the forms of the images in the temples or of the saints with supernatural powers'.

As a world-renouncing *Yogi* he seemed to follow certain rules of conduct, which were enjoined by the scriptures. One of these rules was that a *yogi* should as far as practicable avoid going to the houses of worldly men. Bábáji was found to observe this rule even in his *abadhuta* stage. He appeared to be particularly careful in the observance of this rule with regard to *Rájás* and *Mahárájás* and other wealthy men of high worldly positions. As the stories about his exceptional spiritual attainments and extraordinary mode of conduct spread far and wide, many such big men became his admirers and made earnest efforts to sanctify their houses with the dust of his feet. It has been reported by his attendant *sádhus* how on some occasions the Rana of Udaipur, the Maharaja of Kashmir and some other ruling princes made serious attempts in course of his wanderings in those parts to get him within their palaces, and how with his characteristic sweetness of behaviour, but unbending firmness of determination, he refused to comply with their fervent requests. Even Madholal Panda, who devoted himself heart and soul to his service from the earliest stages of his Kapildhárá life, who constructed for his undisturbed meditation the *yoga-guhá* and the *áśram* on the hill and most gladly bore almost all the expenses not only of himself but also of his attendants and guests, could not persuade him to go for a single day to his residential quarters.

But in this matter also he made an exception in the case of a few poor and distressed people. One day he went to the house of his poor *bhakta* and *sevak* Akku, when he was seriously ill. Not only that. On this occasion he went out of his way to exercise a bit of miraculous power as well. It has been

mentioned before that Akku with his brother Munni and all other members of his family was selflessly devoted to the *Yogiraj* from the beginning of his stay at Kapildhárá. Akku was once on the point of death. At his last moment Munni ran to Bábáji and with torrents of tears in his eyes informed him of the great calamity. He begged for the life of his brother, or at least to put his feet on the head of his *sevak* at the time of his departure from the world. Having listened to the prayers of Munni with his characteristic silence, he calmly got up from his seat and followed Munni to his house. By this time all signs of life had completely disappeared from Akku's body. All the members of the family were crying their hearts out over the dead body. Bábáji sat beside the body of his devoted *sevak* and gently touched it with his fingers. Signs of life reappeared in the body. Bábáji with his own hand put a little water into his *sevak's* mouth. Akku became conscious and was overflowed with the joy of seeing the Lord of his heart by his side. He lay at his feet for some time. Bábáji instructed his wife to prepare *khichuri* for his diet and to nurse him properly. He then returned to his *áśram*. Akku completely came round in no time and again devoted himself to his Lord's service.

It has been said that in his outer life he never acted in a way which might be construed as the exercise of his occult powers. This also was one of the principles of conduct he strictly followed. But on occasions like the above his deep-seated love for the poor, afflicted, helpless persons sometimes seemed to squeeze out of him the manifestation here and there of some amount of supernatural or superordinary power. In the normal course of his conduct, nobody could suppose that he had any power for performing miracles. The people saw his miraculous power in his wonderful capacity to dwell habitually in the supramundane plane, while living and moving and acting in the midst of ordinary men of this world, to preserve the absolute calmness and blissfulness of his mind in the midst of all kinds of disturbing and provoking circumstances and to

refrain from asserting his powers and authority amidst conditions over which he had every right to exercise control.

We have got definite evidence about another aspect of *Nathji's* outer life. He had a fine aesthetic sense. His ears appeared to be fully trained for the appreciation of the superior forms of music, vocal as well as instrumental. He himself used to sing *bhajan* (devotional songs) to the accompaniment of *setar*. His *setar-music* was most charming. When and where and at what stage of his life he got the training, it is not known to anybody. But he had a *setar* with him at the Kapildhárá *áśram* in his post-*sádhaná* stage. A *setar* was also found with him at the Gorakhnath Temple to the end of his physical life. Babu Monoranjan Guha Thakurta, a celebrated writer and an illustrious disciple of Mahatma Vijoykrishna Goswami, has written in a small pamphlet —"Sitting on the summit of the Kapildhárá hill of Gaya Bábá Gambhirnathji used to sing *bhajan* with *setar* at dead of night. On hearing this from the Akashganga hill, *Gosainji* (Vijoy Krishna Goswami) would forget himself and his companions and would run alone like a mad man through the intervening hills and jungles, through thorny shrubs and piercing stones, and appear at the place whence the music flowed." Another illustrious disciple of *Gosainji*, Babu Naba Kumar Biswas has written :—"We were lying on bed in the Akashganga *áśram*. The moonlit night was completely still and soundless. At one or two after midnight we were suddenly charmed with hearing somebody singing divine songs on *setar* at the summit of the hill. Gosain drew our attention and told us, "Listen attentively : what sweet music Bábá Gambhirnath is offering to the Lord !" On some nights he (*Gosainji*), being charmed with this song-offering, would run alone at dead of night towards *Nathji* and would return after an hour or two. One day *Thakhur* (our Master) said, 'Bábá (Gambhirnath) is Love incarnate and a saint with exceptionally great spiritual powers,—such a one is not to be found below the Himalayas. You see that these hills abound

with tigers and serpents and other ferocious animals, but they are all charmed into non-violence by the power of Bábá Gambhirnath. Bábáji sometimes walks at dead of night from hills to hills, with his fingers moving on the *Setar* and the mind absorbed in the *bhajan* of the Lord."

For about eight or nine years after fulfilment of his *sádhaná* his permanent residence was at the Kapildhárá *áśram*. He used now and then to make journeys to different holy places of Bháratbarṣa. It has been mentioned that at the end of his *sádhaná* at Banaras and Prayag, he travelled for about six or seven years as a wandering meditator, and a considerable portion of this period was spent in circumambulating the Narmada in a deeply meditative mood. He visited many other places of pilgrimage at that period and every place he utilised for his spiritual advancement. At the *siddha* stage also he journeyed to a great many holy places, of course without any motive or desire, but as occasions arose. During this time he was generally accompained by a congregation of *sádhus*. Their number was sometimes small and sometimes large. No chronological account of his travels is available, and even the names of all the places he visited could not be ascertained. From what occasionally slipped from his lips in course of his instruction to his disciples in later life and from the accounts given by the *sádhus*, we could gather the names of several places. He spoke of four principal *dhámas* (Residences or Headquarters of the Lord) and four principal *Sarobars* (holy lakes) which he had visited. The four *dhámas* are Puri, Rameswaram, Dwaraka and Badri-Kedar, and the four *Sarobars* are Narayan, Rawal, Manas and Pampa. From this it is evident that he travelled in all parts of India. Through Pasupatinath, Muktinath and Damodar Kunda within the kingdom of Nepal, he went to the most difficultly-accessible sacred places of *Kailas* and *Manas Sarobar*, and probably returned therefrom through Almora. When in 1916 his two disciples Santinath and Nibrittinath expressed their desire to go on pilgrimage to *Kailas*

and *Manas Sarobar* and asked his permission, he blessed them and gave a detailed description of both the paths to and from those places and also instructed them as to the modes of life they should adopt in the particular stages of their journey. Amarnath is another place of pilgrimage very difficult of access. When Bábáji was returning from that place at the head of a large congregation of *sádhus*, he was seen by Bábá Gokulnath who was then a mere boy and was attracted towards him on account of the report which went round that a *Raja-sádhu* (a kingly monk) was passing with his retinue. Some accounts of his journey to *Manikaran*, *Gangotri* and *Jamunotri* are also available. In eastern parts of India also he went to many places as far as Gangasagar. He visited many of the centres of the *Nath-yogi Sampradáya*, which are scattered throughout India.

He used to attend the *Kumbhamela* which is the greatest and oldest congress of the saints of India. There he would attract the attention of all by his profound silence (without of course any vow or artificial effort) as well as his profound love for all. Monoranjan Guha Thakurta wrote a small book relating to his experiences of the Prayag *Kumbhamela* of 1893. In this book he devoted a few paragraphs to Bábá Gambhirnath. This was probably the first occasion of Bábáji's leaving the Kapildhárá hill after his *sádhaná* stage. Goswamiji led his disciples to the great saint. Monoranjan Babu, who accompanied Goswamiji, wrote thus in course of his description of Bábá Gambhirnath,—"The way in which he sweetened the hearts of the visitors by a divine affectionate look accompanied by a slight movement of his head and a little charming gesture, cannot be expressed in language. He rarely speaks. All *sádhus* know him to be a *siddhapurusha*. He was seated in one part of the *mela* (fair) with a large congregation of *sádhus*. One day a rich man presented him with five hundred pieces of blankets. Bábá Gambhirnath was then immersed in meditation. Some time after, he opened his eyes and saw the heap

of blankets. He made a sign with the fingers of his left hand and immediately all the blankets were distributed among those who required them most."

Thus the days and months and years were passing by. Without any plan or design, without any motive or resolution, without any desire or aversion, without any mission or organisation, Yogiraj Gambhirnath, free from all kinds of bondage, detached from all the affairs of the world, inwardly dissociated from all by whom he was outwardly surrounded, went on deeply enjoying the transcendent Divine bliss, silently setting up before those who happened to come in contact with him an extraordinary example of a Life Divine in a material body and under diverse physical and social conditions, calmly diffusing spiritual light among all people, high and low, rich and poor, learned and illiterate, virtuous and vicious, and sweetly showering his blessings and charities upon all who had need for them. Some Divine plan perhaps determined his occasional movements from one place to another and placed his ideal godly life within the reach of the experience of the believing as well as the sceptical minds of the present day. He himself, as an individual, had no idea of appearing before the people as a religious teacher.

While he was thus living a life of perfect freedom, from the spiritual as well as from the worldly point of view, an insistent call came from the monastic order to which he outwardly belonged and from the public of Gorakhpur for his return to the Gorakhnath Temple, his Guru's *áśram*, the chief centre of the *Nath-yogi* community, and for his acceptance of the charge of its management and control. The unbecoming conduct of the *Mohunt* was apparently the occasion for the call. Being above all desire and aversion, he yielded to the pressing demand of the community, and his headquarters were transferred from Kapildhárá to Gorakhpur.

CHAPTER IX

AT THE HEAD OF THE MONASTERY

S'ri S'ri Bábá Gambhirnathji was at this time universally recognized as the greatest saint of the *Náth-yogi* sect. In the society of *sádhus* he was revered as a *Mahápuruṣa*, who having attained the highest stage of self-realization, lived in the world as *jivanmukta*. He had begun his *sádhaná* in early youth at the Gorakhnath Temple of Gorakhpur under the guidance of Bábá Gopalnathji, the then *Mohunt* of the temple. For the purpose of absolute self-dedication to *sádhaná* and the attainment of higher and higher planes of spiritual experience, he left the temple and established himself in several suitable river-banks, jungles and hills, one after another, in different parts of India. After his thirteen years' uninterrupted practice at Kapildhárá of dwelling continuously in the highest plane of spiritual consciousness and turning the divine outlook on the self and the world perfectly into his own normal nature, he became an embodiment of spirituality. His thought, speech and movement were all spiritualized. He attained perfect tranquillity of mind and body. The glory of truth-realization and inner bliss illumined his entire existence. Doubts and difficulties, joys and sorrows, desires and aversions, senses of wants and imperfections could no more have the possibility of approaching his consciousness. He looked upon all the changes of the human, the animal and the physical worlds with equal calmness and gladness as the diverse sportive expressions of the same Absolute Spirit. All these have been noted in the foregoing chapters.

It was at this stage that he was brought back to the Gorakhnath Temple, outwardly by force of circumstances and inwardly by some inscrutable Divine plan. To him now the town of

Gorakhpur and the temple of Gorakhnath had very little difference from the hills of Gaya and the cave at Kapildhárá. He was placed at the head of the management of the big temple and its property. He had to look after the regular worship of the shrine, the moral and spiritual welfare as well as the physical necessities and comforts of the *sádhus*, the collection of rents, the prosperity of the tenants, the hospitality to the guests and other works connected with such a big centre of a great religious sect. He had to become a spiritual guide and a cultural instructor, the custodian of the social dignity and moral purity of a big religious community, the head of a large family of *sádhus* of diverse temperament and character, and also the Zemindar of a pretty big estate. It is easily conceivable how incompatible such a position is likely to be with the dispostion of a man who has spent the greater portion of his life in solitary caves and forests, absolutely detached from all worldly concerns, and all along living the life of contemplation and meditation and enjoying the bliss of innermost spiritual experiences. But he had arrived at a spiritual plane, in which work and meditation could go on together, in which adaptation and response to changing worldly circumstances could be so managed as not to create any disturbance in the even meditative flow of the inner consciousness, in which the serene joy of solitude might be enjoyed in the midst of thundering roars of warring crowds, in which all the diversities of external experience and all the vicissitudes of outer life appeared to the inner consciousness as impregnated with the beauty and sweetness of the "One without a second" shining in the inner experience. Bábá Gambhirnath submitted with unperturbed equanimity to the circumstances as they appeared, and undertook silently all the responsibilities of the position to which he was called. Having returned from his absolutely unworldly life in solitary caves and hills and jungles to the half-worldly life in the Gorakhnath Temple, he seldom left the place except at the call of duty, and he spent the last quarter of his earthly existence quietly

before the public gaze at this headquarter of the *yogi* sect in the big city of Gorakhpur.

Being placed under new circumstances, he at once accommodated his outer manners to their requirements. He adopted the dress and demeanour of a cultured Indian gentleman. The *kaupin*, which had constituted his entire garment, was now concealed under white *dhoti* and *chádar*. The matted hair was disentangled and flowed over his shoulders. The body was no longer besmeared with ashes. He began to use a cot and a bedding for sitting and lying on. He occupied a dark windowless compartment on the ground floor of the two-storied building of the *Mohunt*. Though the *Mohunt*, who was guilty of abusing his position and power, was practically divested by pressure of public opinion of all powers of management and control, his position as the ceremonial head of the *áśram* was in no way interfered with and he was allowed by Bábá Gambhirnath to enjoy all the glories and comforts pertaining to and consistent with the dignity of his position. Bábáji began to exercise full power and authority over the monastery as the manager under the disqualified *Mohunt*. The small compartment which Bábáji occupied was his sleeping room, his drawing room, his office room as well as the room for enjoying the pleasure of trance and imparting instruction to the truth-seekers. All these diverse kinds of activities were to him, so far as could be judged from the manner in which he attended to them, as of the same degree of importance or unimportance. There was no change even in his facial expression in his passing from one form of action to another.

Almost throughout the day he remained seated on his bed in a state of half-trance. It seemed that ninety per cent of his consciousness was functioning (if it could be called functioning at all) in some transcendent supra-mundane spiritual region, to which the people round about him could have no approach, while with the remaining ten per cent only he used to carry on the affairs of this world and to deal with all sorts of men.

People with different kinds of business would appear before him and present their cases. He would receive them with the gentle ray of smile which always radiated from his face and half-open eyes, and listen to them with such perfect silence and apparent indifference that it was difficult to guess whether the words had reached his mind. But just at the appropriate moment he would give answers to their questions or solutions to their problems, whether practical or theoretical, in one or two shortest possible sentences. In most cases he would satisfy the people with such simple words as, 'yes,' 'no', 'all right', 'this would do', 'do this', 'avoid that', etc. Even when the officers of the *Mandir-estate* came to receive instructions with regard to very puzzling complicated issues concerning the property, his mode of dealing with them was in no way altered and no sign of any puzzle or trouble was visible on his forehead or eye-brows. He uttered his 'yes' or 'no' in his usual manner with perfect peace and tranquillity and passed again into the realm of blissful silence. That was found to be enough for the officers and they went away satisfied with regard to the nature of the direction.

This mode of disposing of things should not, however, be confounded with sheer indifference to mundane affairs, as we ordinarily understand it. The officers, the tenants, the *sádhus*, the guests, the servants,—all felt that though the *Yogiráj* was sitting on his bed almost always with half-closed and inwardly directed eyes, nothing really escaped his notice, and he was not altogether indifferent to what ought to be and what ought not to be. His insight into the worldly affairs also was so deep that even the experienced officers dared not take any important step without informing him and taking his permission. Sometimes, while sitting composedly in his usual posture, he would suddenly open his eyes and send for an officer and would again pass into the depth of silence. When the officer would come, he would again arise, as it were, from deep sleep, mildly put one or two questions to him, and on hearing his answers would

give him some warning or direction by signs or words and go down into himself again. Perhaps some action or inaction on the part of the officer was improper and undersirable; he was made conscious that his conduct had not escaped his notice and he was softly chastized and asked to mend his ways. The officer became ashamed and resolved to improve his conduct. If any officer made any kind of oppression upon the tenants or realized rents from them without tender consideration for their pecuniary circumstances, the *Yogiráj* would at once become awake, and in his usual calm and sweet manner would remind the officer that anybody who was indifferent to the health and comforts of the children (meaning, the tenants) of Gorakhnath was not worthy to be a servant of Gorakhnath.

The tenants of Gorakhnath's Zamindary felt in their heart of hearts that *Boodá-maháráj* (as Bábáji' was generally addressed by them) was more than their father and mother, inasmuch as he was not only full of sweet affection for them, but had also infinite power to cure their ills. Even while living at a physical distance from him, they had the conviction that his merciful eyes were always on them. Nobody could take any unfair advantage of his unworldly character in the administration of the *áśram* and estate, and nobody would feel discontented that he was not receiving what attention he deserved from the *áśram* authority. But while everything was going on smoothly in every department of the monastery, and a pure spiritual atmosphere could be breathed in all its parts, whenever any one turned his eyes towards the person who was the life and soul of the entire organization, he would find with astonishment that the attention of that central personality was far far away from this world and was perhaps wholly concentrated upon some changeless, blissful, self-luminous Reality.

The self-enjoying *Yogiráj* took particular delight in feeding the poor and the holy and the cultured, and he appeared to regard this as one of the main functions of the *áśram*. He ordered the celebration of *utsav* on particular festive occasions

in different seasons of the year, and on all such occasions the feeding of the *sádhus*, the *pundits*, and the poor half-starved men, women and children constituted an essential part of the *pujá* of the Deity. He taught that the *sádhus* represented the ideal of renunciation for the sake of the spiritual perfection of human life, and the Brahman *pundits* represented the ideal of self-dedication to moral, religious and intellectual culture at the sacrifice of worldly comforts in the Hindu society. Individual *sádhus* and Brahmanas might fall far short of the ideals and might even be guilty of positive sins, deserving severe punishment at the hands of the Deity and the society. But *sádhus* and Brahmanas as classes should not be condemned or looked down upon for that reason, even though the number of such erring individuals be found to be very large at any period of the history of the society. The institutions of *sádhus* and Brahmanas have evolved in the social life of Indian Humanity in course of its development from time immemorial, and the ideals they represent are worthy of being kept before the mind's eye by all men of all ages and countries. The continued existence of these institutions, in spite of the impurities that might have entered into them, is a perpetual source of spiritual and cultural inspiration to millions and millions of unsophisticated people of this vast continent. To respect, serve and look to the comforts of the *sádhus* and the Brahmans in general as representatives of the spiritual and cultural ideals of the human society amounts to offering worship to these ideals and receiving inspiration from them. The *Yogiráj* taught that by constantly associating in thought and feeling the *sádhus* and the Brahmanas with the ideals they represented, such a habit should be formed that the very sight of any *sádhu* or a Brahmana might inspire the mind with the noble ideal of embracing poverty for the sake of spiritual and cultural attainments. For the purpose of giving this lesson to all around him as well as awakening the dormant self-respect and self-confidence in the *sádhus* and Brahmanas themselves, Yogiraj Gambhirnath used to show in his

characteristic way tender regards even to the unworthy *sádhus* and Brahmanas, and never treated them in such a way that they might feel humiliated or form low estimates of themselves. By this behaviour they were constantly reminded of the ideals for which they stood and to which they owed all the honours and privileges they enjoyed, and other people also were inspired with the same noble ideals.

With regard to the proper use of the temple-property, Bábá Gambhirnath's teaching and conduct pointed out that the property of the Deity was really the property of the poor, that the Deity enjoyed the property dedicated to Him through its actual enjoyment by the poor, that the worship of the Deity, in order to be fruitful, must be embodied in the service of the poor. The religious endowments in this country were the most nobly conceived and efficiently organized institutions for the maintenance of those who either embraced poverty and directed their time and energy solely to the pursuit of high spiritual and cultural ideals of human life, or were placed in distressful circumstances through misfortune or on account of their inability to stand in the struggle for existence. Both these classes of people were dependent for their food and clothing and shelter upon the generosity of the society, and it was the duty of those who had resources at their command to look upon them in the same way as the earning members of families look upon the minor children and the old infirm members of these families. The religious endowments were made by the society through their more fortunate members for service to these poor sections of the community. They were dedicated to the Deity Who is the real Protector of all and is the true Self of the rich and the poor alike, and they were entrusted for management and proper use to saintly persons who had renounced the world, had no self-interest and devoted their life to the service of the Deity and the poor. It was as an important part of the worship of the Deity that the *sebait* or the *Mohunt* was in duty bound to place himself in the service of

the poor. Yogiraj Gambhirnath taught this duty of the persons in charge of the management of shrines and religious endowments by his own example as well as by his instruction.

The Gorakhnath Temple, being reputed to be one of the principal sites of Gorakhnath's *tapasyá* and being one of the biggest centres of the *yogi* sect, is regarded as a particularly holy place of pilgrimage to the Hindus in general and Gorakhnath's followers in particular. It is believed that the sacredness of a holy place becomes much more dynamic and inspiring by the presence of a perfectly self-realized *Mahápuruṣa*. Accordingly it can be easily understood that, at the time of Bábá Gambhirnath's stay at the Gorakhnath Temple, numerous pilgrims from far and near came to the Temple. Among them were *sádhus* and householders, men, women and children, persons of high social position and people having no position in the society. Many of them came with the sole purpose of being blessed with Bábáji's *darśan*. Bábá Gambhirnath, as the principal *sevak* of the Temple, was found to be careful about the comforts of them all. Though he talked so little and was almost always in a semi-trance state, his reputation for hospitality and charity spread far and wide. His arrangements for looking after the comforts of all in-comers, whatever might be their position, were perfect. Whenever any guest felt any kind of inconvenience, the *Yogiráj*'s attention was attracted towards it, his half-closed eyes as well as his lips gently opened, he whispered to some *sevak* or officer to go to them and remove the cause of their inconvenience; sometimes he himself sent them the articles they needed without being asked for them. The guests were struck with wonder to discover that the eyes of the trance-enjoying *Yogi* were at the same time all-pervading and solicitous about the comforts of all. He used to say even to his disciples that he, being a servant of Gorakhnath, was a servant to them all, and that they, being the guests of Gorakhnath, were the objects of his respectful service. He actually looked after their comforts, of course in his characteristic way,

just as a pious householder of exceptionally reserved nature would arrange for and look after the comforts of respectable invited guests. Even his giving of *darśan* and receiving of *pranám* appeared from his manners to be of the nature of service rendered from a sense of duty to them.

Not only did the men who came near to him feel his love and affectionate attention towards them, but the subhuman animals also were charmed by his love and mercy. Service to the cows was an essential part of the *Mandir*-work. The *Yogiráj* sometimes walked to the *Go-śálá* himself to supervise the arrangement for the comforts of the cows and bulls and to caress them. He had a tiger which forgot its ferocious nature in his company. He had an elephant for his *váhan* (carrier). Both the tiger and the elephant died suddenly soon after he had departed from the physical world. He used to keep milk at the places where serpents were known to dwell; he used to feed rats and ants with particles of bread with his own hands; dogs, cats, and monkeys also received their shares of his loving service.

It should be remembered that all these were mere spontaneous outward expressions of his boundless and fathomless universal love, and these practical demonstrations, instead of being the measures of his love, were mere lessons for others. In his apparent social life he was the perfect embodiment of love, non-violence, calmness and sweetness.

Every year the *Yogiráj* spent a few months in the villages within the Zamindary of Gorakhnath, evidently to see with his own eyes, and to demonstrate his practical sympathy with, the joys and sorrows of the poor children of Gorakhnath, to afford them opportunities to approach him and have the pleasure of informing him directly of the circumstances under which they lived and receiving blessings from him. A kind and sympathetic look and a word of consolation were enough to lighten their hearts and to give them a message of hope and peace. Acts of charity, private as well as public, for the removal of their

physical wants were of course performed by him, wherever he went. The consciousness that they were the tenants of God and were under the care of a *Mahápuruṣa* who was inwardly identified with God was awakened in them, and this was of the greatest moral and spiritual value to their life. The attention which this *Mahápuruṣa* paid to the villages and the poor villagers was an object-lesson to all owners and managers of landed property.

We have in our humble way attempted to draw a simple picture of the outer life of Yogiráj Gambhirnath in the Gorakhnath Temple, as it could be seen by any observer. His inner life was beyond our access, beyond the depth of our comprehension. His contemporary saints, connected outwardly with different schools of religious discipline and themselves widely revered for their high spiritual attainments, used to speak to their own admirers very highly about this silent unassuming *Siddha-Yogi*. He was believed not only to be a perfectly enlightened person in continuous, undisturbed enjoyment of blissful unity with the Supreme Spirit amidst all kinds of worldly circumstances, but also to be a perfect master of *Hatha-Yoga* and *Rája-Yoga* with *Yogaiswaryya* (Divine powers attainable only through the most intensive practice of *yoga*) of an exceptional order. Some illustrious saints with their deeply penetrating spiritual insight (e.g. Mahátmá Vijoy Krishna Goswami) openly declared that Yogiráj Gambhirnath had in him the power of *Sristi-Sthiti-Pralaya* (i.e. creating, sustaining and destroying the world). In the *Yoga-śastra* the possibility of the attainment of such perfect lordship over the entire cosmic order by *yogis* of the highest type is asserted. It means that all the forces of Nature,—the whole *Prakriti*,—come under the control of the *Yogi* in the state of his perfect self-fulfilment. He becomes identified with the eternal, absolute *Yogiswara*,—the Supreme Spirit,—the eternal Lord of Prakriti,—not only in respect of perfect self-illumination and bliss, but also in respect of power. But such power is never exercised by the *yogi*,—and he can

never have any will or occasion to exercise it,—in violation of the order of the universe as determined eternally by the effortless, self-illumined Cosmic Will and Power of the absolute *Yogiswara*. Minor powers are occasionally exercised by the *yogis*, and that also in accordance with the cosmic plan of the *Mahá-Yogiswara*. These minor powers, though minor in the view of the *yogi*, are often of such nature, that they appear miraculous, supernatural, superhuman, to people of the lower planes of knowledge, and strike their minds with wonder aud admiration.

Pious people who would often come to the Temple for the *darśan* of Yogiraj Gambhirnath would sometimes make direct or indirect attempts to get some light about *Yoga-śakti* from him. He would generally maintain his characteristic silence. On rare occasions something in this connection might come out of his lips. Once a gentleman reported to him on the basis of a newspaper report that a *Mahátmá* stopped a moving train, which was otherwise in proper order, by merely casting his look at the engine. The gentleman eulogised the spiritual greatness of the *Mahátmá* and asked for the opinion of the Yogiraj. The Yogiraj gently said that such powers had no connection with spiritual greatness, and that they could be acquired by the cultivation of a minor *yoga-vidyá* for a certain period. He added that there were such processes in *yoga* that by systematic practice of them for certain periods a *yogi* could acquire the power of blowing away big mountains by mere will. Persons who grew somewhat familiar with him would now and then take courage to talk to him about different kinds of occult powers shown by other *yogis*. The way in which he responded to such talks led those persons to conclude that all these feats of apparently miraculous powers were nothing but a child's play to him. He seemed to have had personal experience of all of them and to have abandoned them as of no value,—as of no importance to the life of a *yogi*. He sometimes cautioned

his disciples and other earnest spiritual aspirants against being allured and entrapped by such minor *siddhis* or occult visions and powers, which were only by-products of *yogic* culture, and were not to be regarded as even near about its aims and objects. He sometimes hinted that he might teach such methods of *Hatha-Yoga* that by practising them a *sádhaka* could maintain his physical body in a healthy state for a thousand years; but that should not be the aim of a spiritual aspirant.

In his normal dealings with men the Yogiraj would invariably deny that he possessed any supernormal power or any supernormal knowledge. He would behave like an ordinary *sádhu.* Only his perfect calmness and tranquillity, his constant meditative mood, his unfailingly sweet and dignified disposition, his love and sympathy and compassion for all men and all creatures, would distinguish him from all other *sádhus*. But on exceptional occasions his compassion seemed to extort from him, as it were, some expressions of what he would call *minor siddhis*. It has been noticed elsewhere how out of deep compassion for the Akku-family at Gaya he once restored Akku to life. It was heard from Bábá Suddhanath that while the Yogiraj was at Kapildhárá in company with a number of *sádhus*, a mad man would often come there and put the *sádhus* to lots of troubles, which would sometimes become unbearable. Once the Yogiraj out of sympathy for the harassed *sádhus* and compassion for the mad fellow, caught hold of him and gave a slap on his face with his own hand. The man was cured once for all and became a thoroughly sane and sober, pious and generous-hearted householder. It was sometimes noticed by other *sádhus* who would go to the Yogiraj to get inspiration and instruction from him that in hills and jungles the wild animals would behave like domesticated dogs in his presence. At Gorakhpur it was often found that severely distressed men and women with children or other dear ones hopelessly ill would surrender themselves to his feet and with cries of agony seek for his mercy. The Yogiraj seemed to have kept two specific

medicines for all kinds of serious diseases, viz. Gorakhnath's *Bibhuti* (ashes) and *A'sápuri-dhup* (a kind of incense). When moved by compassion, he would give these as token of his blessings, and the suffering persons got the relief prayed for. They knew that it was the wonderful *yogic* power of the *Siddha-Mahátmá* which saved those lives from such hopeless conditions. But the Yogiraj would say that it was Divine mercy and that he was altogether powerless.

Let me cite here a small instance of a *minor siddhi* of the Yogiraj on the basis of the recorded evidence of a reliable eye-witness. Sri Atul Bihari Gupta, M.A., B.T., was a reputable teacher of the Government High School at Gorakhpur. He wrote a valuable book in Bengali on *After Death and Rebirth.* In this book he described in detail an incident, which he himself experienced together with Rai Saheb Aghore Nath Chatterji, the then Head Master of the School, about the *yogic* power of the Yogiraj. He was, as he says, a sceptic with regard to occult powers of saints; but he used to go to Yogiraj Gambhirnath now and then, while he was here. The Yogiraj being very taciturn, he could not much enjoy his company. But the Rai Saheb believed him to be a *yogi* of a very high order, possessing extraordinary occult powers. One afternoon both of them, while at school, felt inexplicably impelled just at the same moment to go to the Temple to see the saint. On reaching there, they saw the Yogiraj sitting in the veranda in the meditative mood characteristic of him. Shortly after, a respectable old widow with another female companion came to him. The only son of the widow had been in England for studying the law. She was not getting any news about the boy for four months. An anxious wire to a friend of the boy brought the reply that the boy was not in London and that the friend did not know his whereabouts. The mother was upset. She had a strong faith that the Yogiraj could give her the exact news about her son. With a bleeding heart she caught hold of the Yogiraj's

feet and went on weeping and praying for the news of her son, the only support of her life. She would not pay any heed to his pleading that he was a humble mendicant without any occult knowledge or power and that he had no means to bring her the news of her son. After a pretty long period the saint's solid calmness seemed to be melted by compassion for the distressed motherly heart. He gently asked all of them to wait and retired to his solitary compartment and shut the door from inside.

They all waited in anxious suspense. The Yogiraj came out after about half an hour in a deeply meditative mood. He told the mother in a mild tone that her son was quite hale and hearty in the steamer and would safely arrive here on Monday next. The mother's heart was fully assured. She took the dust of his feet and left the place with a smiling face. All her cares and anxieties were gone. It was Wednesday evening.

On Wednesday following at about 4 p.m. Aghore Babu called Atul Babu to his house. On arrival Atul Babu found a bright young man of U.P. neatly dressed in the right European style talking in English with Aghore Babu. The latter introduced the young barrister to Atul Babu, adding in a suppressed tone that this was the son of that widow and that he had reached on Monday just as Bábáji had said. Aghore Babu further proposed that they should now pay a visit to the Temple. The barrister, who had in his boyhood been a student of his school, complied with his request. As soon as they reached the Temple and saw Bábáji, the young barrister exclaimed in English,—"Halo Bábá, you here ?" He then addressed the Yogiraj in Hindi,—"When did you reach here ? Landing in Bombay, I caught the Imperial Mail; I did not find you in that train !" His two companions were taken aback. Aghore Babu inquired if he had seen Bábáji anywhere. The young man replied,—"Certainly. When our steamer was in the sea at a distance of about one day's journey from Bombay, I saw this *Mahátmá* standing just in front of my cabin. I

felt interested in finding an old-fashioned Indian *sádhu* moving near the first class in the steamer. I came out of the cabin and had a talk with him for about five minutes. He then went away. I had no idea that he would be coming to Gorakhpur. I did not see him again either in the steamer or in the train." Atul Babu inquired about the day and the time of their meeting. The young sáheb replied that it was on previous Wednesday sometime before dusk. The time exactly coincided with the time of Bábáji's shutting himself up within his compartment. The Yogiraj was perfectly silent when the young man was giving the account of his strange meeting with him on the steamer, and the young man also did not know of what extraordinary interest the account was to his elderly companions. He was not aware of his mother's interview with the Yogiraj.

Incidents of this type were of course very rare in the Yogiraj's dealings with men, so far as we know. But there were supernormal events of another type, which were experienced by many men and women who cherished faith in him and earnestly prayed for his mercy in times of serious troubles and difficulties. He would give relief to the distressed devotees in various mysterious ways,—particularly to those who were physically at a distance from him. We have got many such reports from reliable persons. But such acts of mercy performed by the Yogiráj from behind the scene cannot with propriety be included in his biography. Nor can these be mentioned as illustrations of his *yogic* powers. In truth, the life of a saint of this type behind the scene is far greater than the life presented outwardly before the eyes of the society. He wholly concealed his greatness as a *yogi* from the gaze of the people, and at the same time wanted to be serviceable to all from behind the scene. In such services rendered without attracting public notice, his superhuman spiritual powers were often quite easily manifested.

With reference to his act of mercy by the exercise of his supernormal power, we may mention here one other incident. One earnest spiritual aspirant was a seeker for initiation from

the Yogiraj. But he was pledge-bound to his wife, who was also of a deeply devotional mind, that they should take initiation together. Unfortunately, before they could find the opportunity to present themselves at the feet of the *Guru*, the wife died. The gentleman was upset. When he got the opportunity, he approached the Yogiraj in a deeply pensive mood. He prayed for his mercy. But he added that his initiation would give him no peace, unless his departed wife also was blessed with initiation at the same time along with him. *Yogiraj* pointed out the improbability of a dead person's initiation. But seeing the most distressful mental condition of the earnest devotee, his compassionate heart yielded, as it were, to the impossible proposal of the devotee. According to the *Guruji's* instruction, at the time fixed for initiation two seats were placed side by side facing the *Guruji's* seat. The devotee was instructed to take his seat and to keep his eyes closed till initiation was over. The devotee with eyes closed felt that his beloved wife also took her seat by his side and was being blessed with initiation from the Divine Personality along with him. After the ceremony was over and he was allowed to open his eyes, he prostrated himself at the feet of the *Guruji* and felt himself fulfilled. Again he wanted to be assured that his wife also was similarly blessed. The Yogiraj in his characteristic manner assured him. A departed person was brought down from the other world and blessed with formal initiation.

One evening towards the close of 1916 some politically-minded educated *bhaktas* were sitting in front of Yogiraj. He was in his usual meditative posture with half-closed eyes, perfectly calm and tranquil. The First World War was then going on with all its horrors. The *bhaktas*, while enjoying the silent blissful presence of the great *Yogi*, sometimes passed into talks about the sensational war-news published in the papers. Some *bhaktas*, who had some familiarity with Yogiraj, tried now and then to draw his attention outward to some specially striking incidents. Yogiraj, unless deeply immersed, would

gently respond with a sweet smile. It seemed that there was nothing new, nothing striking, to him. One of them, a Bengali disciple, mustered courage to put a question to him, though he was almost sure that the habitually self-concealing *mahá-purusha* would not give any definite reply. He asked with folded hands,—'Bábá, when will this war come to an end ?' Yogiraj seemed to be in a little communicating mood. He said,—'The present war will not take a very long time to end. It may end in a year or so. But some time afterwards a much more terrible war will take place, and in that war almost all the nations of the world will be directly or indirectly entangled. It will have far-reaching effects upon the world.' All the persons present were taken aback by Yogiraj's prophesy. The disciple was emboldened to ask another question. 'What will be the fate of our Hindusthan ?'—he feelingly asked. Yogiraj softly answered,—Hindusthan will have better days,—"*Hinduthan ká bhalá hi hogá, achchhá hi hogá.*"

CHAPTER X

POPULAR RELIGION RECONCILED WITH VEDANTIC KNOWLEDGE

Yogiráj Gambhirnath was described by other saints possessing deep spiritual insight as *Máyátita* (one who has transcended the world of *Máyá*), *Trigunátita* (above the influence of three gunas, *viz.* Sattwa, Rajas and Tamas), *Yuktayogi* (a *yogi* whose entire nature remains consciously unified with *Brahman* or *A'tman* in the midst of all the changing external circumstances), and so on. He had reached the highest stage of Vedántic knowledge, attained the supreme ideal of *yoga*, experienced the identity of himself and all other *jivas* with *Brahman* and realized the world as the diversified manifestations of the non-dual Absolute. By prolonged practice he had brought down this *Samádhijá Prajná* (the supreme knowledge attained in the deepest trance) into the normal nature of his phenomenal consciousness. It was at this stage that he took charge of the Gorakhnath Temple and came in social contact with the people of the world.

Though himself above all differences of the actual and the ideal, bondage and liberation, the worshipper and the Deity, etc., he in his *áśram*-life strictly complied with the requirements of popular religion, as enjoined by the *śástras*. In conducting the affairs of the *áśram* and in giving instruction to the people at large, he never ignored the importance of popular rites and ceremonies and the *śástric* modes of worshipping the Deity in diverse names and forms. He himself set examples by offering such worship and arranging such ceremonies. When asked about the efficacy of such ceremonial worship of different gods and goddesses for the fulfilment of particular desires and for advancement in spiritual life, he gently replied

that no doubt should be cherished with regard to what the Rishis had prescribed in the *śastras*.

He also declared that gods and goddesses really existed as the regulators of particular departments of the phenomenal world, that they were the moral and spiritual powers governing from behind the natural forces the courses of physical phenomena and of human destinies, that those who worshipped them with faith and earnestness could have direct intercourse with them and have their prayers granted by them. But, he reminded the truth-seekers, they were all non-different from God the Absolute, they were the self-manifestations of God with various qualifications and with diverse names and forms and having special connections with special departments of the physical and mental universe. So long as the world of diversities appeared to be real, he explained, the deities should not be regarded as unreal, since both were manifestations in diverse names and forms of the same Absolute Reality; though the reality of both was phenomenal (*Vyávahárika*), the deities represented higher orders of phenomenal reality than the objects of sensuous experience, because in the former the nature and power of God were mirrored in a far greater degree and clearer form than in the latter. Ultimately, all were *Brahman* and *Brahman* was all, and nothing but *Brahman* really existed.

The Rishis were truth-seekers. They not only attained true knowledge of the transcendent character of *Brahman*, but were also acquainted with the spiritual, moral and physical laws which govern the *máyik* world. They had deep insight into human nature and were conversant with the normal course of its development. Their instructions should, therefore, be looked upon with high regard.

Through his conduct and teachings he wanted to show that the conflict between reason and faith, philosophical truth and popular beliefs, reflection and meditation on the 'One without a second' and ceremonial worship of numerous gods and goddesses, living the life of freedom and willing

obedience to the commands of the scriptures and the society, appeared to be irreconcilable only so long as reason did not reach the height of spiritual self-realization and stand face to face with the ultimate object of its quest. Reason at first asserts itself in human nature as a rebellious child. It revolts against whatever stands in the way of its free self-expression and self-development. In its quest of Truth it moves onward with implicit faith in the infallibility of the abstract principles of Formal Logic, and declares a merciless crusade against whatever apparently fails to satisfy their demands. In its growing success it forgets the limitations of the principles it relies on. Proud of its discovery of higher and higher abstract truths, it becomes more and more indifferent to the concrete manifestations and embodiment of those truths in particular forms realizable to commonsense. The higher and higher abstract universal concepts, farther and farther from the particular names and forms and objects of sense-experience, are accepted as representing the truer and truer characters of Reality, and the concrete realities of popular experience are rejected as false. The highest Truth of reason is thus found to be the most abstract and the farthest from the world of concrete experience. But the knowledge of all such rational truths and even of the ultimate Truth is indirect and cannot finally satisfy the demand of reason itself. It feels a yearning for coming face to face with Truth, and the satisfaction of this yearning requires prolonged spiritual self-discipline and deep meditation. When by this means Truth is directly realized, the Absolute Reality reveals Its perfect character to such concrete experience of the purified soul. The conflict between reason and common sense then disappears. Reason lays undue emphasis on the abstract aspect of Truth, and common sense upon its diverse names and forms. Common sense regards these diverse names and forms and realities, and reason revolts against this and conceives of the abstract principle as the Reality. But the closest acquaintance with the nature

of Reality obtained through spiritual discipline and meditation reveals that there is truly no difference between them, that the concrete many are the self-manifestations of the Abstract One. The One and the many are not mutually contradictory, but in each of the many the One embodies and enjoys Itself, not partly, but wholly, though in various forms. A man of true insight sees the One in Its perfect glory everywhere in all the sensible forms. So long as this experience is not attained, knowledge is not perfect. Whether we speak of the knowledge of *Brahman* or the knowledge of the world, the knowledge remains imperfect until and unless *Brahman* is experienced as shining in all Its glory in the diverse phenomena of the world, and the world is experienced as a spiritual entity non-different from *Brahman*.

This knowledge being attained, nothing is looked down upon, nothing appears to be insignificant or contemptible, nothing becomes a source of disgust or uneasiness or agitation. Everything can then be truly appreciated in its essential moral and spiritual relation to its immediate surroundings as well as to the world system and also as a particular form of self-expression of *Brahman*. The entire world of experience with all its diversities appears as good, beautiful, and blissful. There is no ground why at this stage of self-fulfilment of the rational consciousness of man the popular forms of worship and the socio-religious rites and ceremonies prevalent among the different sections of humanity should be detested or discouraged or abandoned as superstitions.

What is realized as true, good, beautiful, and blissful in the highest plane of spiritual consciousness by the *Mahápurushas* is put before the people in general as the ideal to be pursued by them. What is real to the *siddhas* (the men of realisation) is the ideal to the *sádhakas* (the aspirants). The approved social customs and habits, the religious rites and ceremonies, the diverse forms of the worship of gods and goddesses,—all these are enjoined by the *sástras* and encouraged by the

Mahápurushas as means to the *sádhakas'* realisation of Abso ute Truth, Absolute Good, Absolute Beauty, and Absolute Reality as experienced by the self-fulfilled *Mahápurushas*, and the Absolute Ideal as sought to be attained by the aspirant for self-fulfilment. The *Mahápurushas* enjoy the various rituals and practices as the particular concrete forms, in which the Absolute Truth—Beauty—Good—Bliss embodies and enjoys Itself, and the *sádhakas* are encouraged to have recourse to them for the culture of relative truth, beauty, good, and bliss, and to cultivate the habit of contemplating them from the viewpoint of the *Mahápurashas* for progressive approach to the realization of the Absolute Ideal-Reality.

It is in this light that *Mahápurusha* Gambhirnath viewed and taught the people to regard all kinds of rituals and practices. To disdain them, as many so-called rationalists do, was according to him the sign of our ignorance or partial view of Reality. He did not allow any negligence of the prescribed forms of worship in the temple and he himself took part in them. He went round the temple (*pradakshin*) and attended the *árati* (light-waving, etc.) along with the other *sádhus* and *bhaktas* (devotees). He had definite instructions to the *pujári* (the *sádhu* in charge of the regular worship of the Deity) and other *sádhus* not to be indifferent to the rituals.

Yogiráj Gambhirnath, though himself always in the meditative mood, offered special encouragement to *Játrábhinaya* (itinerant religious dramatic performances), *Ráma-lilábhinaya* (dramatic performances depicting the life-story of Ráma, the ideal man-god of India), *Kirtan* and *Bhajan* (religious songs), etc. The professional parties that specialized in them used to come to the *ásram*, sometimes on their own initiative and sometimes on invitation, to entertain the *sádhus* and *bhaktas*. The Yogiráj asked the officers of the temple to make arrangements for their performance and himself encouraged them by his presence and kind look of approbation. He used to explain in a few words to those around him that these were not mere

amusements, but national educational institutions which moved from place to place and imparted highly useful education to the mass of people with regard to the various aspects of the domestic, social, political, moral, and religious ideals and duties of the Hindus. Being given in the garb of amusements, the truths appealed directly to the heart and became very effective. The truths discovered and cultured by the highest in the society naturally flowed to the lowest through these institutions. No more effective means for mass education could be conceived.

He also pointed out that these institutions had also a powerful liberalizing influence upon the outlook of the people. They generally based their instruction and entertainment upon the stories of the *Rámáyana*, the *Mahábhárata* and the *Puránas*. The stringent rules and regulations, the elaborate rites and ceremonies, the distinctive forms of worship and discipline, which were based on the injunctions of the *Vedas*, the *Smritis* and the *Tantras*, represented one side of Hinduism. The lives of Ráma and Krishna, the principles illustrated in the anecdotes described in the *Rámáyana*, the *Mahábhárata*, and the different *Puránas*, the religious songs composed by the mystic poets, the stories about the ways of conduct of the *Jivanmuktas* and the *Bhágabatas* of different ages, etc. constituted another side of Hinduism. The two sides were complementary to each other. The one side lay greater emphasis upon the discipline and purification of the body and the mind and the necessary segregation of oneself from all possible undersirable influences. This, if not properly understood, might have a tendency to create a narrowness of outlook and an undue attachment to ritualism and mechanical obedience to rules. The other side, therefore, laid greater emphasis upon universal moral culture, the culture of altruistic feelings and social virtues, the cherishing of humanitarian and cosmopolitan ideals and the breaking of artificial barriers raised through attachment to ritualism. The proper harmony of these two sides, emphasized by the two classes of scriptures and their exponents, was necessary for the

entire moral and spiritual character of man being perfectly built up and led towards the realization of Absolute Truth, Beauty, Goodness, and Bliss. Strict conformity to the rules of discipline imposed by the scriptures and the A'cháryas recognized by the society and the community to which one belonged and the spiritualization and universalization of outlook were both necessary for harmonious self-development and self-perfection. The contribution made towards this end by the popular *Játra* etc., was considerable. It helped greatly also in bringing together on the same level of moral, spiritual, intellectual, and aesthetic culture, the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the learned and the illiterate, the *sádhus* and the householders, the followers of different sectarian forms of worship, the men brought up under different social customs, etc., who together constituted the Indian Society. The Mohammedan and the Christian masses also were brought under the influence of Hindu culture to a great extent by the charm of these institutions. Bábá Gambhirnath used occasionally to attract the attention of his English-educated and partially westernized disciples and admirers towards the great part played by these instruments of mass education in the development of the moral, spiritual, intellectual, and aesthetic culture of this great country.

Yogiráj Gambhirnath, though himself above all sense of difference between man and man and even between man and insect, free from all prejudices with regard to food and touch and other social customs, and always dwelling in the highest spiritual plane of superconsciousness, did not approve of the wilful violation of the long-standing social and religious customs and restrictions by men of ordinary intellectual and moral calibre. He held that such violation contributed little to any desirable reform, but did considerable injury to the transgressors by taking away the social restraint upon their sensuous propensities and capricious desires and the spirit of indiscipline. Real reform, he taught, could be accomplished by men

extraordinarily gifted for the purpose,—by men of true insight into the inner life of the society and the spirit of the age. For leading a well-disciplined life and preparing the body and the mind for the pursuit of higher ideals, an ordinary individual ought to abide by the rules and regulations which the society and the *śástras* as interpreted by the recognized A'cháryas enjoined upon him. These rules and regulations are not of course eternal. They are liable to change; only the underlying spirit and purpose are eternal and will remain the same. When in future these present rules will be repealed and new rules will take their place, the future generations of men should, with the same moral and spiritual end in view, follow the new rules without any thought of the repealed ones.

Though holding such views, with regard to the mode of life of ordinary men, his own catholicity and generosity found expression off and on in his dealings with men and things. Let me give an illustration. One day he was sitting still in his habitual mood on a terrace in front of the main temple. An educated Bengali disciple was by his side. A well-dressed young woman alighted from a carriage, approached the temple, entered into the inner compartment of the temple, bowed down with deep reverence before the altar, came out and made obeisance to Bábáji and went away. Though her behaviour was in every respect like that of a pious lady, it somehow struck the disciple that she was a prostitute, and he was wondering how she could be allowed to enter into the temple. The Yogiraj read his thought and in a tone full of kindness and love said that even she, being a Hindu, was entitled to enter the shrine. A new truth was revealed to the disciple. Even a prostitute by profession, an outcaste in the eyes of society and kept at a distance by every decent gentleman, is entitled to enter into the inner compartment of a temple, stand in the closest proximity to the Deity, and offer worship to Him, because she is a believer in the Hindu Deities, the Hindu ideals, the Hindu forms of worship, the Hindu scriptures and the Hindu manners

and customs. On account of her immoral practices her company may reasonably be forsaken by the pious men of the society; but she is not on that account forsaken by the merciful Deity. The Deity accepts worship from, and takes mercy on, all those who sincerely believe in Him and offer their hearts to Him. All persons, virtuous or vicious, belong to the Deity; but the Deity belongs exclusively to none. A true believer in the Deity has no moral or religious right to debar another believer from access to the Deity on the ground of the latter's low birth or immoral conduct.

CHAPTER XI

THE YOGIRAJ AS A RELIGIOUS TEACHER

One day, while Bábá Gambhirnath was sitting in his usual meditative mood on the Kapildhárá Hill and enjoying the bliss of Divinity within, some educated Bengali gentlemen approached him, made obeisance to him and prayed for religious instruction. The Yogiraj received them with the characteristic Divine smile of his eyes and lips, which silently conveyed to their heart the message of the infinite and eternal Truth, Beauty and Bliss. When pressed for a few words of instruction, he gently replied with the deepest humility, "I really know nothing, I have nothing to teach you." The gentlemen, though greatly impressed by the humility of the *Mahápurusha*, whom they believed to have reached the highest stage of spiritual experience, humbly and earnestly repeated their prayer. The Yogiraj also gently repeated his answer. There was no ring of levity or insincerity in his answer. He appeared to be not at all conscious that he knew any such new truth as he could communicate to them by word of mouth. He calmly hinted that if they felt inquisitive, they might see his mode of living and draw their own inferences from it and seek for Truth within themselves.

Answers indentical in meaning with the above were received by other persons, who sought verbal instruction from him. There was and could be no form of pretence in his answers. He had reached a state of spiritual experience, in which he felt that (to speak in the language of lower planes) 'he knew nothing.' He had sought for Truth, he realised the Truth in his own self, he lived the Truth, but he did not *know* the Truth. *Realisation* of Truth is not *knowledge* in the ordinarily understood sense of the term. In Truth-realisation there is no distinction

between subject and object, there is no empirical process of knowledge, there is no affirmative or negative predication through which alone knowledge is possible in the normal consciousness. In the spiritual realisation of Truth, the subject, Self, is itself its own object, the self-luminous Self shines by itself in its own perfect glory, and no attributes or categories are experienced by means of which this transcendent nature of the Self can afterwards be described or even conceived. This is a state above *knowledge*. So long *knowledge* occupies the field of consciousness, Truth is not realised, and when Truth is realised, *knowledge* is transcended. How can the Self, which is the ultimate Truth, be described in terms of knowledge ? Truth-realisation is a phenomenon of the superconscious plane, in which the distinction between phenomenon and noumenon disappears. When the Yogiraj came down to the normal plane of consciousness with the vivid memory and deep impression of the self-luminous Truth on it, he found the manifestations and embodiments of the same Truth, the same Self, the same *Brahman*, all around himself as well as within himself. Whom to teach ? What to teach ? What was the new truth to be taught ? Was there anything other than the Truth ? He found none. He himself was the Truth. He lived in the domain of the Truth. The questioners themselves were the embodiments of the same Truth. This was the viewpoint, or rather the experience, which pervaded the whole consciousness, the whole being, of Yogiraj Gambhirnath. Hence it was not natural for him to give instruction to others. It took some time before he could be drawn down to a plane in which he could be persuaded to become a religious teacher.

The more he came in contact with the people of the lower planes of experience, the more did his outer behaviour accommodate itself with the feelings and needs of these people, though the inner current of his meditation and self-enjoyment flowed on uninterrupted, and his spiritual outlook on men and things remained untarnished. Gradually he began to speak a word

or two by way of instruction to the sincere truth-seekers. Every word that issued out of his lips was full of meaning, full of spiritual significane, though the words he uttered were always very simple. The way in which he expressed himself left no doubt in the minds of the hearers that he had no consciousness of superiority of himself in relation to others, that he cherished within himself no desire for or claim to teachership, that he had no thought of removing the ignorance or error of the people or enlightening their heart or intellect with any new truth. In his speech there was no enthusiasm, there was no effort to convince others, there was no pretension to speaking from a higher plane, there was no assertion of speaking with authority. His lips appeared to speak with the same detachment and unconcern as his eyes appeared to look on. But still the truth-seekers who approached him felt that the few words spoken through his gentle lips with supreme unconcern were the verbal embodiments of the truths directly experienced within his perfectly illumined consciousness, that the words, though uttered almost in an inaudible tone, came out with a force capable of producing a deep and lasting impression upon the hearts of the inquirers and of sweeping off long-cherished errors and prejudices.

Thus, in spite of himself, so to say, Yogiraj Gambhirnath began to play the part of a spiritual magnet, attracting from far and near groups of seekers for spiritual Truth and infusing spirituality into them, sometimes by his silent touch and sometimes by the touch of a few gentle words. Many people coming with worldly ambitions also felt that they were fulfilled by the supernatural power of his silent blessings, though he himself never gave any outward indication of the presence of any such power in him. These people, however, became attached to him in admiration and reverence, and as the result of this there would take place almost without their knowledge a change in their outlook, and they would turn their attention to spiritual culture. Many impious and ill-disposed men also, happening

to come in contact with him, were conquered by his silent love, sweet demeanour and speechless message of peace and bliss, and were converted into saintly persons and selfless servants of the society. The influence he exercised upon the spiritual atmosphere of the country was indeterminable by any empirical standard. But many renowned religious teachers with deep spiritual insight proclaimed that the extraordinary silent man, apparently dissociated from and unconcerned with all the affairs of the world, was an inexhaustible source of spiritual power and spiritual wealth in the country, that he was radiating unseen rays of spirituality from his humble, lonely seat throughout the atmosphere of the entire country and the world. Leaving mysticism apart, it was found that in course of a few years Yogiraj Gambhirnath, in spite of his profound silence and self-effacing humility, in spite of his avoidance of the lime-light of publicity, became recognised as one of the greatest spiritual forces and religious teachers of the age.

This was the renown he attained during the years he kept his permanent seat at the Kapildhárá Hill and occasionally moved out on pilgrimage in company with his admiring associates. When circumstances placed him at one of the principal centres of the *Náth-yogi Sampradáya* (community) and one of the holy places of pilgrimage of the Hindus in general, he could not hide himself to the same extent as he had previously done. To have *darśan* (sight) of the *Mahápurusha* and *sparśan* (touch) of his feet was generally regarded as the most spiritually significant part of the pilgrims' visit to the shrine. By virtue of his personality as well as by virtue of his position he was acclaimed as the Head of one of the most widespread religious communities of India. The field of his activity, empirically speaking, immensely widened. He had now to become a *Karma-yogi* again.

We had a glimpse of how he conducted his business in the two preceding chapters. Even at this stage the Yogiraj could not for many years be persuaded to accept the

position of *Guru* or spiritual-guide. He seemed reluctant to recognise any person, however earnestly willing to abide by his instruction, as his disciple. Acceptance of *Guruship* would amount to the public declaration that he was a religious teacher and that he was prepared to be the custodian of the spiritual welfare of those who would become his disciples. Such a declaration he was not ready to make even by implication. Many earnest truth-seekers fervently and prayerfully expressed their desire to place themselves under his sole guidance. Several of them approached him with strong recommendations from respectable persons, who were supposed to be his special favourites. But Yogiraj Gambhirnath, though full of compassion for them, maintained adamantine silence on the question of accepting them as his disciples. He received them cordially, looked after their comforts, expressed deep sympathy with them for their taking so much trouble in coming to him from long distances, uttered a few words of consolation and instruction, conferred silent blessings on their head and then bade them farewell. He would not take the responsibility of *Guruship*. On one occasion he said with a slight touch of humour, "Should I form a *paltan* (army) ?" He did not like to become the commander of an army of disciples, who would implicitly carry out his orders, nor was he ready to take the responsibility which *Guruship* implied for the spiritual advancement of a certain number of disciples.

For a long time nobody was blessed by him with forma initiation, though innumerable men and women, young and old, got spiritual inspiration from him, obtained aphoristic moral and religious maxims for their guidance, derived immense benefit from his holy company, and felt within themselves the wonderful power of his mercy and love. But the course of events seemed to have its influence upon the outer behaviour of even a Man-God—a man who habitually dwelt in the plane of Divine consciousness, a man who was inwardly untouched by changes of worldly circumstances. Yogiraj Gambhirnath,

having, through the long course of systematic *yoga-sádhaná*, conquered all the worldly forces, transcended all the worldly bondages and limitations, and entered the eternally blissful domain of the Absolute Spirit, might not like to come down to this diversified material world again and to have even any physical connection with it; but this world had need of him. It is the Divine plan that the human society should not altogether lose sight of the ideal of Divinity immanent in the human spirit, should not be deprived of the consciousness of the Divine possibilities inherent in the inner nature of man. It is this plan which draws down to this world and places before the eyes of the human society persons of the type of Yogiraj Gambhirnath, in whom that ideal is perfectly realised and visibly embodied, in whom those Divine possibilities are fully actualised and presented in flesh and blood. The presence of one such man in a society in one age awakens in countless men the consciousness of what a man is capable of, what a man can make himself by dint of his own endeavours, what a glorious destiny awaits man if only he exerts himself and disciplines his body and mind in a prescribed manner. The men who realise Divinity in themselves are found to bow down to this Divine plan and come down from their absolutely blissful plane of differenceless unity of the Supreme Spirit to the mundane plane of differentiated and diversified unity in order to be put in social contact with the self-forgetful suffering people of the world. Yogiraj Gambhirnath also allowed himself, perhaps in spite of his partiality to the blissful state of uninterrupted deep *samádhi* which he was enjoying in solitude, to be led on step by step to the society of men and to be presented before the eyes of various orders of people. Love and mercy for the people of the world prevailed over his liking for the peace of solitude, and meditation on and enjoyment of God in his own self was now supplemented by the worship of and service to God in diverse forms—in the forms of living creatures. The two went on side by side. The one found tangible expression in the other.

As time went on, his apparent disinclination to act as the 'Commander of an army of disciples', also gradually slackened. He had to yield to insistent demands upon his service to society in this particular form as well. Being perfectly free from egoistic consciousness, he could not think of himself as the *guru* or commander and guide in relation to anybody. Pure love was the determinant of all his activities. He saw the same Supreme Spirit, that was his own self, as the self of every living creature; his love for and devotion to the Supreme Spirit found expression in his affection for and service to living creatures; his growing contact with the external world led to the gradual expansion of the field of outward expression of his love, and multiform demands upon his service led to a variety in the forms of expression of his love. His instruction to the truth-seekers was also a form of his worship to the Spirit and service to the human embodiments of the Spirit, his own self. When in response to persistent prayers from ardent spiritual aspirants he had to accept them as disciples and to take the responsibility of guiding them in the path of true religion, this also he did as a form of worship and service to the Universal Self. It was, as it were, a form of intercommunion between him and his self and Lord through His particular human embodiments. Even when hundreds of men and women surrendered themselves at his feet and placed themselves under his command, he would never use such expressions as would directly mean that he was their *guru*, that he was the master of their mind and heart, that he accepted charge of their spiritual welfare or that they were bound to obey him.

He was hardly ever heard to use verbs in the imperative mood. While giving instruction to his disciples, he would generally say that 'such was the injunction of the *śástras* (scriptures)';—that 'with regard to this problem *śástras* offer such a solution.' When any disciple asked for his definite orders on any point, he, instead of giving any orders, would only give in the mildest tone a simple expression of his opinion or utter

a simple word of advice. Of course, he left nothing vague or indefinite or ambiguous in the opinion he expressed or the advice he offered. The meanings of the simple words he uttered were always clear, and they seemed to have an irresistible force to dominate the intellect and the heart of the hearers. But the manner in which they were spoken was humility itself. He appeared to be always speaking in a worshipful attitude, whoever might be the persons addressed. Even when giving directions to his personal servants or the humble officers of the *Mandir*-estate or the petty tenants of the Zemindari, he would seldom use expressions of command; even when passing any sentence upon a wicked culprit, he would hardly use any strong language. The punishment he inflicted on any offender was also to him a form of loving service, and the manner in which he performed his duties in such cases clearly demonstrated the depth of his love and his spirit of service. There was no heat anywhere in whatever he did or said; but the absence of heat nowhere meant the absence of force or the absence of definiteness. His mildness and humility were the fulfilment of his strength and self-confidence.

In reply to questions regarding the true relation between the *Guru* and the disciple, he would say that, according to the authoritative scriptures, *Śiva* or *Brahman*—the Supreme Spirit, the true Self of all—is the sole source of all knowledge and power, that He is really the *Guru* of all seekers of Truth and Power and Liberation, and that whatever human medium He may choose for transmitting His Divine light to, and awakening the spiritual energy of, particular disciples ought to be looked upon and revered and obeyed by the latter as His living Image, as the visible Embodiment of His love and mercy, as the omnipotent and omniscient Lord compassionately coming down to them for their spiritual enlightenment and emancipation from bondage. The disciple, accordingly, should make no distinction between the Divine *Guru* and the human *Guru*; he should see the Supreme Lord in the person he accepts as his *Guru*,

should regard him as the custodian of his own spiritual welfare and should surrender his ego to him from the same point of view. Self-surrender to the *Guru* does not mean the slavery of reason, but the enlightenment of reason and the fulfilment of the freedom of reason. The disciple should exercise and discipline his reason in accordance with the Divine light obtained from the *Guru*, should realise in his own consciousness by dint of his own systematic rational endeavours the Supreme Truth, a glimpse of which he has got through the mercy of his Truth-seeing *Guru*, and should try to experience within himself the blissful Freedom,—freedom from all limitations of knowledge and power and love and self-enjoyment,—which he has found fully realised in the *Guru*.

While supporting *Guru-váda* (the doctrine of the Divinity of the *Guru*), he would never allow too much outward exhibition of *bhakti* (devotion) or *śaranágati* (self-surrender) on the part of his disciples to himself. He would always insist that the more the sentiments of devotion and faith could be deepened within, the more effective would they be for spiritual advancement, and that outward expressions, though to some extent necessary and helpful, not unoften made them light and insincere. He would not allow his disciples to fall flat before him by way of *pranáma* (salutation). The utmost he would allow them was to bow down their head, to touch the ground with the head in a sitting posture and then to take the dust of his feet. He would always ask them to cultivate the sense of freedom, the sense of dignity, the sense of self-confidence, the sense of inner strength. He would instruct his disciples to cultivate *bhakti* of the strong, and not *bhakti* of the weak and helpless. His message was always the message of strength and hope, though delivered in the mildest tone. He would express his strong disapproval, though in his calm and dispassionate way, whenever any of his disciples thought himself to be a sinful man, whenever anyone brooded over his past sins, whenever anyone considered himself weak and helpless,

whenever anyone lost hope and courage. His instruction was,—"Look forward, never look backward," "Always cherish high hopes for the future, never be disheartened." He used to tell his disciples—"Never direct your attention to what evil you did in the past, or what good you might have done, but did not do, or what happened or might have happened to you, what opportunities you did not avail yourself of, nor pay your attention to what will be the results of your present actions or what will happen to your lot in the future; do at present what you in your judgment think best for you to do, and leave everything else to the *Guru* or the Divine Lord; that is true faith as well as true *Purushakár* (manly act)."

As a religious teacher Yogiraj Gambhirnath, though himself constantly moving in the plane of supra-rational realisation, appeared to be a thorough-going rationalist, and never dogmatic in his assertions. He always instructed the truth-seekers to think freely and calmly, to act freely and intelligently, to discipline their body and mind freely and energetically, to cultivate faith, love, charity, humility, the spirit of devotion and service, the sentiments of admiration and reverence and the other noble virtues with the fullest freedom of reason and will. *Sádhaná*, he would say, bears its sweetest and most glorious fruits, when practised with freedom of judgment and freedom of volition. The Divine Light descends upon him, who freely surrenders his ego to the *Guru*, and unreservedly opens his disciplined mind to Him for being illumined by His Grace.

It has been remarked on a previous occasion that it was never his habit to use any verb in the imperative mood, for he never openly assumed the role of a master or commander. For the guidance of his disciples he did not even prescribe a set of rules and regulations, as is usually done by religious teachers in general. He could not be persuaded to formulate any disciplinary injunctions as to what his disciples should eat or refrain from eating, what domestic or social customs they should follow or discard, how many times they must repeat

the *Mantra* or the Divine Name, at what posture they should sit at the time of *upásaná* (worship), whether they should worship any particular Divine Image or not, whether they should think of *Brahman* as with form (*Sákára*) or without form (*Nirákára*), whether they should do or should not do this or that. All these he left to the independent judgment of the disciples. He refused to codify any commandments. He refused to put any pressure or exert any commanding authority upon the rational freedom of thought and action of the disciples. Liberation (*mukti*), he would say, means the perfection of freedom of the human spirit; and accordingly the seekers of liberation, instead of being taught to mechanically or compulsorily follow a certain set of prescribed rules and regulations, should rather be taught to develop and regulate their freedom by the exercise of their own wisdom and normal sense. They might abuse their freedom and deviate from the path of Truth, Goodness and Bliss; the painful consequences of their deviation should, by the Grace of the *Guru* and Lord, bring them back to the right path and teach them the proper use of freedom. There need be no anxiety on that account. It is, from the spiritual view-point, far better to suffer and to learn than to blindly follow and become a machine with respect to certain practices, however noble and useful. This seemed to be Bábá Gambhirnath's principle in imparting spiritual education to his disciples. In reply to most questions with regard to the details of conduct, he would give the general instruction, '*Vichár-Karná*'—'*you should think for yourselves*.' His instructions were almost always of a general character; the working out of the details of *sádhaná* as well as outer behaviour, the particular application of the general principles to practical life under the special circumstances in which individuals might be placed, he would leave to the good sense and free judgment of his disciples.

While asking his disciples to *think for themselves*, to find out the solutions of the practical problems of their inner and outer

life, by the exercise of their own reason, he would advise them to take the help of *śástra* (recognised scriptures) and *Mahápurushabáni* (sayings of the renowned saints) to ensure the correctness of their conclusions. He emphasised the need of faith in and obedience to the national scriptures and national saints, for they truly represented the culture of the country, the spirit of the society in which the individuals were born, the truths arrived at and accepted by the collective reason of the nation to which the individuals belonged. The books which have been accepted by the society as *śástra* (authoritative scriptures) for thousands of years and which have been exercising such a wide and powerful regulative influence upon the life and mind of our own people, high and low, rich and poor, learned as well as illiterate, for countless generations, ought to be looked upon as sacred, and sincere and earnest attempts ought to be made to affiliate our individual judgments with the principles laid down in them and to regulate our thought and conduct freely and voluntarily in accordance with those principles. The *śástras* are the linguistic embodiments of the intellectual, ethical and spiritual truths realised by the ancient truth-seekers (*Rishi*), and rationally established and amplified by the refined and enlightened understanding of the renowned philosophers (*Muni*) of old. They were tested and adopted and applied to the varied needs of the society by the illustrious teachers and leaders (*A'chárjya*) of the country in different ages, and accepted as infallible by the collective life and mind of the society for so many centuries.

It is neither consistent with national self-respect nor expedient for prudent and intelligent search for truth to discard and repudiate these moral, spiritual and cultural treasures of the country, these glorious productions of the best and most enlightened truth-seekers of the past, these precious legacies inherited from our most illustrious ancestors. Faith in them awakens our sense of dignity, illumines our reason, elevates our ambition and hope, puts a healthy check upon our sensuous

impulses and irrational whims, shows the way for the proper exercise of our freedom and opens to us the path to Truth, Beauty, Goodness and Bliss. Faith, in the true sense of the term, is in no way incompatible with the freedom of reason and will. It is a very loving and lovable friend and guide of the undeveloped and unenlightened reason and will of truth-seeking individuals. Faith delivers the reason and will of individuals from the bondage and slavery of passions and prejudices, from the dominating influence of the sensuous propensities and mental cravings and likes and dislikes and puts them in the path of true freedom discovered by those who realised perfect freedom in the past. Yogiraj Gambhirnath wanted to impress upon his disciples the necessity of the cultivation of Faith in the *śástras* and *A'chāryas* of the country along with the cultivation of reason and will for advancement in the path of *sádhaná* and fulfilment of life. He used to put his teachings in this connection in the form of a *Hindi* aphorism, —*Viswás rakhná, Vichár karná, sab taraf achhá hoga,*—keep faith, think for yourselves, and you will realise good in all respects.

Along with this the Yogiraj would also remind them that it was not quite easy to comprehend the true significance of the *śástric* teachings on any subtle question. Without adequate moral and intellectual discipline, it is not possible to penetrate into the secrets of the *śástra*. *Śástras* sometimes present the truths in such linguistic garbs that undisciplined and unrefined intellects cannot distinguish between the truths and the garbs, between the established conclusions (*siddhánta*) and the incidental sayings (*arthaváda*). For this reason ordinary truth-seekers do not unoften lose their path in the forest of the scriptures and are bewildered and confounded. Moreover, different *śástras*, though inwardly pointing to the same Truth and leading to the same Ideal, are found to be outwardly so divergent in the modes of their approach and interpretation, that it is practically impossbile for the lower orders of intellects to reconcile and harmonise them and to attain freedom from narrowness and bigotry,

without which the path of spiritual advancement would remain for ever blocked.

On this account the help and guidance of *Mahápurushas* (truth-seeing saints) is indispensably necessary. It is these saints,—these men with thoroughly disciplined and refined reason,—who alone can truly understand the inner significance of the *śástric* teachings and can discover the point of unity of all the apparently conflicting texts of the different *śástras*. Sincere truth-seekers should try to comprehend the true meanings of the *śástras* with the aid of these *A'chárjyas* (teachers with spiritual insight) and to develop their own reason in pursuance of the light obtained from them. Yogiraj Gambhirnath used to impress upon his disciples the necessity of "exercising their reason and will freely and energetically with faith in and under the guidance of the recognised *śástras* and the trustworthy saints of the land."

When it was pointed out to him that the great saints also belonged to different communities and sects and were found to differ from one another in the forms of their teachings, the modes of their outer conduct, and the methods of moral and spiritual discipline adopted and preached by them, the calm and tranquil Yogiraj gently remarked that in the midst of these external differences there was deeper unity among the really truth-seeking saints. But, he added, as the unity was not readily palpable, every truth-seeker, while cherishing an attitude of reverence towards all saints of all sects and of all opinions, should regard as the centre of his life and light the particular *Mahápuruṣha*, whom he accepted as his *Guru*, and should study the *śástras*, excercise his reason, regulate his thought, feeling and conduct and pursue particular courses of spiritual discipline, in the light of the directions obtained from the mode of life and the oral instructions of that *Mahápurusha*. A disciple, by dint of his moral, intellectual and spiritual endeavours, should aim at reproducing the life of the *Guru* in his own life, the truth-realisation of the *Guru* in his own spiritual experience,

the enlightened outlook of the *Guru* in his own thoughts, emotions and actions. In this way the disciple should unite himself spiritually with the *Guru*.

Let me try to give an idea of the Yogiraj's mode of imparting instruction to his disciples. The Yogiraj is on his seat and in his habitual meditative mood; his eyes are half-closed, steady, perhaps focussed on something within; there are no movements on any of his limbs; apparently ninety per cent of his consciousness is unified with the Universal consciousness; a gentle halo of smiling brightness visible on his face is an index of his internal joy. A small group of disciples is assembled on the floor near his feet. All are enjoying the sight of a man who has the body human, but consciousness Divine. Some of them are mentally repeating the Divine *Náma* obtained from him, some are trying to implant his image on their inner hearts, some are eagerly waiting for some words from his mouth. Perfect silence is reigning in the compartment. Perhaps an hour or two or three pass away. There may be fresh entrance into the room, and one or two cases of exit as well. But the pure atmosphere of silence remains unchanged. On many occasions the assembly had to disperse in silence without being blessed with a single word from the *Guru*, for it might be the time for bathing or taking meals or for the *árati* or evening worship of the Deity or for some other obligatory duty. But the time would not be considered lost, for the sense of the Divine would invariably be awakened and strengthened in his presence, there would be dynamisation of spiritual urge in the hearts of the disciples, some spiritual power would appear to be transmitted into them from the silent picture of the *Guru*.

On some occasions one or two of the disciples, finding or thinking that the Yogiraj was not too deeply absorbed in himself and might make some response to their questions, would take courage to break the silence of the atmosphere and with humility and reverence to put one or two questions to him. The Yogiraj, if not wholly beyond the reach of their words, would, like a

person just roused from deep sleep, gradually widen his look a little, cast a mild and merciful glance upon the questioner and the other disciples present, open his lips as if with some effort and utter a word or a short sentence in the softest and sweetest tone in reply to the question. If further relevant questions were asked one by one and the questions were earnest and sincere, answers also would follow in the same aphoristic forms. If questions ceased, or if the questions were for questions' sake, and not from an earnest sense of need, the Yogiraj would pass into silence again. On some rare occasions, in order to make the true meanings of his short answers easily intelligible to the imperfect understanding of the questioners, he would illustrate them with anecdotes, which were interesting as well as instructive. His answers were always as terse as pregnant with meaning. They appeared to be gently and sweetly flowing down through his lips from a fountain of knowledge and experience which was unfathomable to the audience, though he himself had no presumption of knowledge and experience and he ordinarily seemed to be not conscious of knowing anything or possessing any remarkable power.

I finish this chapter with the reproduction (of course in free, and on some points, explanatory translation) of some questions put to the Yogiraj and his answers to them with regard to the relation between the *Guru* and his disciples.

Q : It is found in certain scriptures that the *Sad-Guru* takes the entire charge of the spiritual welfare of his disciples : is it true ?

A : The disciples ought to cherish and develop this faith and rely upon the *Guru*.

Q : Should it be understood that the disciples are wholly relieved of their responsibility for *sádhaná* and they are not required to exert any *purushakár* ?

A : True faith in the *Guru* always creates within the disciple a deep sense of responsibility for regulating life in obedience to the teachings of the *Guru*, leaving

the consequences in the *Guru's* hands. It relieves his mind of all anxieties about success or failure.

Q : Does not the *Guru* compel the disciples to do what is required of them and forcibly lead them to the path of salvation ?

A : Spiritual life is not a matter of compulsion and force, but of free and voluntary obedience and self-discipline.

Q : Who is a *Sad-Guru* ?

A : A *Sad-Guru* is one who has realised Divinity within himself and can transmit spirituality into others.

Q : Have we not got the mercy of a *Sad-Guru* ?

A : If you have true faith and can keep the faith alive, you may be sure you have got it. It depends on your faith.

Q : It is said that every disciple of a *Sad-Guru* must attain *mukti* within a definite period : is there truth in it ?

A : There is no such rule. It depends upon the faith, earnestness, systematic endeavour and spiritual worthiness of individual disciples. Some may realise Truth and become *mukta* in the twinkling of an eye, as soon as the *Sad-Guru* touches them or utters a word to them. Some may require many births to get rid of their *karma* and *básaná* and to realise the Truth, the seed of which has been implanted into their souls by the *Sad-Guru*. Have you not read this in the *Gita* ?

Q : Is it possible for any truth-seeker to realise Truth without being initiated by a *Sad-Guru* ?

A : It is possible in exceptional cases, where a *sádhaka* was in his previous birth so much advanced in the spiritual path that in this life his spiritual energy is dynamised and his spiritual insight is illumined even without the touch of any

self-realised soul. But the general rule is that the spiritual energy and insight of a man remain in a dormant and unillumined state, and it is only a *Sad-Guru* who can dynamise and illumine them by the touch of his own dynamic and illumined soul and open the door of truth-realisation to the *sádhaka*.

Q : Does truth-realisation depend upon the mercy of the *Guru* or the effort of the disciple ?

A : It depends upon the co-operation of both. A disciple can receive and enjoy the mercy of the *Guru*, can be truly conscious of the progressive illumination of his being by the Divine Light coming from the *Guru*, only through his own self-exertion, through the discipline of his heart and intellect in accordance with the teachings of the *Guru*, through the conscious opening of his mind to the *Guru* for receiving knowledge and power from him.

Q : Are there not instances in which the *Guru* unveils the Truth all on a sudden to a disciple and illumines his whole being without any conscious co-operation on his part ?

A : Yes; but these are exceptional cases, on which an earnest truth-seeker and ardent disciple should not rely. Moreover, such special occurrences also are determined by the previous self-preparation of the *sádhakas* in their past lives and their worthiness to receive the Truth.

Q : Are *Guru* and *Iśwara* identical or different ?

A : It depends upon the outlook of the disciple. If he looks upon the *Guru* as an individual man, then the *Guru* must of course be distinguished from the Lord of the universe, even though that individual might have realised through his *sádhaná* the identity

of his self with the Supreme Self. If the disciple looks upon the *Guru* as identical with *Iśwara*, he is to him really identical with *Iśwara*, even though he as an individual might not have realised Godhead in himself. In truth, as it is taught by the *śástras*, the *Guru* is to the disciple identical with *Iśwara*, even though he appeárs in a small body and has limited knowledge and power manifested in him. Nay, the *śástras* sometimes teach that the *Guru* is superior to *Iśwara*. This means that the *Guru-aspect* of *Brahman*—the Supreme Spirit—is superior to His *Iśwara-aspect*. As *Iśwara*, *Brahman* is the Omnipotent and Omniscient Creator and Ruler of this boundless world of diversities. *Iśwara* represents the aspect of Lordliness of *Brahman* in relation to the *Jivas*. While as *Guru*, *Brahman* is the loving, merciful and benevolent Bestower of true spiritual knowledge upon the finite spirits (*Jivas*) and their Deliverer from this world of bondage and suffering. The *Guru* represents the aspect of *Brahman's* Love and Mercy. As *Iśwara* He conceals His transcendent character behind the veil of ignorance, while as *Guru* He unveils it. Hence, to a seeker of Truth and Deliverance, the *Guru* is superior to *Iśwara*, and he naturally feels inclined to worship *Brahman* as *Guru* rather than as *Iśwara*, whose *máyá* is the concealer of Truth and creator of bondage. When this *tatwa* or truth is understood, it is realised that there is only one *Guru* without a second of the whole universe, just as there is only one *Iśwara* without a second. The human *Gurus* are to be looked upon and revered as the human self-manifestations of the one *Guru*. Hence no distinction should be drawn between one *Guru* and another, and no comparison or

contrast should be made among them. They are all embodiments of the Divine Love and Mercy, revealing the same Divine Truth to different sets of His objects of love and mercy in different ways and drawing them to Himself in different paths.

THE GOSPEL OF YOGIRAJ GAMBHIRNATH

I. Make no distinction among Deities. They are different only in Names and Forms, but identical in Substance. One Absolute Spirit is conceived and worshipped in diverse ways by diverse orders of religious men. Have regard for all sacred Names and Forms, but see the same Spirit in them.

II. Pay homage to all religious systems, but strictly adhere to your own with faith, love and reverence. Forms of discipline may be various, but Religion is essentially one. Develop the true spiritual outlook through the practice of your own religion, and you will experience the unity of all religions.

III. Try to grasp intelligently, by the proper exercise of your reason, the eternal spiritual truths taught by the *Guru*, the scriptures and the recognised saints, and regulate all the departments of your life in pursuance of them. The entire life ought to be directed towards perfect freedom from bondage, ignorance and sorrow.

IV. Have faith in the spiritual power of the Divine Name obtained from the *Guru*. Repeat It within your mind and meditate on Its real (not literal) significance as often as you can. Remember that the Name is the living embodiment of the Absolute Spirit. Try to realise the Spirit in the Name. Be devoted to the Name, and the Name will bestow all blessings upon you and lead you to perfect bliss.

V. Shake off your 'Me' and 'Mine,' and surrender yourself wholly to the Lord. You will then find that He has taken the entire charge of you. Pray to Him for nothing except Truth and Love.

VI. Think not of the past and be not anxious about the future. Do what you sincerely judge to be your present duties, and advance onward with faith, courage and optimism. Remember that the Lord knows and decrees what is best for you.

VII. Be truthful, straightforward and charitable in thought, speech and action. Don't think and speak about the dark sides of people, and don't hurt their feelings and interests. Try to be serviceable to all, specially to the poor and the world-renouncing truth-seekers. Believe that all services rendered with humility are forms of worship to the all-pervading Divine Spirit.

VIII. Discipline your mind to feel the presence of the Absolute Spirit in all beings and to appreciate His *leela* in all human affairs and natural phenomena. The whole world will then be revealed to you as spiritual, sublime, beautiful and blissful.

IX. Try to realise first the essential unity of all men and then of all other creatures as well. But observe that in practical life they, being endowed with different types and orders of capacities, dispositions and environments, must have different kinds of duties, functions, responsibilities and ways of approach to the ultimate Ideal of life.

X. The *Bhagabad-Geeta* is the infallible guide for all orders of truth-seekers of all ages and countries and sects. It harmonises the teachings of all scriptures and saints and is therefore the Universal Scripture.

CHAPTER XII

INSTRUCTION TO DISCIPLES

Yogiraj Gambhirnath seemed not to have any teaching or preaching mission. He did not seem to belong to that class of enlightened saints who felt within their hearts some urge for enlightening others and giving them lessons with regard to the right path for regulating their conduct and character. The Guruship seemed to have been thrust upon him, just as the responsibility for the management of the monastery was thrust upon him. He accepted the one just as he accepted the other, without any will and enthusiasm, and without much reluctance and resistance either. He always dwelt in the superconscious plane. He looked upon all affairs of the world, including the affairs of his own physical life, from the Divine view-point. To him everything in the world seemed to be going on just as it ought to be. To him nothing appeared to be particularly desirable and nothing appeared to be particularly undesirable. He enjoyed in his own way from the supernormal plane of his consciousness whatever would happen in the normal course within the domain of his outer experience.

He saw all things as Divinely planned, and enjoyed them all as fine expressions of the Divine Spirit. He had nothing to wish for and nothing to escape from. When any duty would of itself come to him in accordance with the Divine plan, he would take it up in obedience to that plan with his characteristic calmness and tranquillity. It was perhaps the Divine plan to present him before the modern society as a living example of a *Sthitaprajna*, a *Yukta-Yogi*, a *Gunátita*, a *Jnáni-Bhakta*, a *Brahma-sthita*, an *Avadhuta*, a *Nátha*, as described in the *śástras*. Earnest spiritual aspirants would generally come to him to be blessed with his *darśan*, to enjoy his speechless, motionless,

tranquil presence, to be enlightened and purified by his spiritual power, and not to hear any talk from him, not to take verbal lessons from him. His Guruship was felt within by the truth-seekers, and not from his outer instructions.

If he had studiously observed the vow of absolute speechlessness (*mouna*), it might appear as an exhibition of supernormality in his normal life. This he did not do. He talked as occasions arose, though very seldom. If on any occasion he uttered half a dozen sentences at a stretch, it would appear exceptional to everybody who used to visit him. All visitors, all disciples, all *sádhus* and employees of the monastery, were accustomed to the profound silence which was characteristic of his normal nature. But still, as it has been found, when questions were seriously put and answers earnestly awaited, solutions for all kinds of vital problems were obtained from him. In spite of the fewness of the words he spoke, his disciples as well as the occasional truth-seekers obtained from them adequate guidance for the regulation of their religious, moral, social and domestic life.

His Guruship, however, it may be noted, lay not in imparting such occasional oral instruction, but in moulding the intellect and the heart of the disciples from within, in lighting up their inner consciousness,—even without their distinct knowledge,—with the spiritual flame always ablaze within himself, in clearing away the impediments,—internal as well as external,—from the path of their spiritual progress by inscrutable means, and in guiding them inwardly on step by step towards the supreme ideal of life. His work as the *Guru* was mainly behind the scene, and this was more and more realised by the disciples, as their outer consciousness was refined and trained to dive more and more deeply into their inner consciousness. With the progressive purification and refinement of their faculties of thinking and feeling, the disciples could gradually realise the significance of his simple saying that the *Guru* is never at a distance from the *Śishya.* The nature of every individual

is too complex and mysterious to be intelligible to himself, until and unless his intellect is perfectly illumined, when the complexity of his nature also vanishes. Hence the plan and the method which the *Sad-Guru* adopts for the progressive liberation of the souls of individual disciples from all complexities of their natures remain inscrutable to them. But in due course the *Guru* liberates them.

We want to give here a general idea of the views which the Yogiraj expressed in response to the questions of the truth-seekers by his aphoristic utterances and often by mere hints, with regard to the essential features of religion.

First, he generally instructed his disciples to regulate their inner as well as outer life in accordance with the principles of *Sanátana Dharma.* He often suggested that *Sanátana Dharma* should be carefully distinguished from *Sámpradáyika Dharma* (sectarian or communal religion). *Sanátana Dharma* is not a particular system of religion, not a stereotyped set of rules and regulations, not a specialised form of *sádhaná* or *upásaná*, not any particular doctrine or belief about God or the Ultimate Reality. It did not originate from the teachings of any *Rishi* or group of Rishis, any saint or prophet, any *Avatára* or Messiah, or any powerful religious organiser, at any particular time. It is the Eternal Universal Religion of Humanity, based upon Eternal Universal Principles, by following which man can progressively spiritualise his whole nature, can bring about complete harmony between himself and the cosmic order, can attain perfect freedom from all bondage and sorrow, and can enjoy the bliss of Divinity in human life. A *Sámpradáyika Dharma* (sectarian religion) is a particular shape and form, in which *Sanátana Dharma* is presented by a particular influencial religious teacher to a particular section of people. Every *Sámpradáyika Dharma* has its specific creed, specific modes of self-discipline, specific rules of conduct, specific social organisation. These specific features of the sectarian religions separate them from one another and not unoften create narrowness,

bigotry, fanaticism and hostile feelings in the minds of their followers. Such religious sectarianism not only becomes a source of many ugly disturbances in the human society, but also permanently blocks the path of spiritual progress of the simple-minded faithful votaries of these religious systems. Devotion to a *Sámpradáyika Dharma* is necessary and useful for self-discipline in the formative period of spiritual life; but the devotees must be cautious against narrow-minded fanatical devotion, which may mean spiritual suicide. They should always keep their eyes upon the universal principles of *Sanátana Dharma* to remain safe from the dangers of sectarianism.

According to the teachings of Yogiraj Gambhirnath, *Sanátana Dharma* is not to be conceived as one of the numerous sectarian or communal religions of the world. *Sanátana Dharma* is one, eternal, universal, *apauruṣeya*; while *Sámpradáyika Dharmas* are many, particular, born in time, created by men or supermen. They are all manifestations of *Sanátana Dharma*, appearing in particularised forms, with particular creeds. The eternal and universal spiritual truths of *Sanátana Dharma* underlie them all, constitute the essence of them all and are sometimes veiled by their particular garbs,—by their external special features. Many such *Sámpradáyika Dharmas* were born in the lap of *Sanátana Dharma* in the past; many died out after having served their divinely ordained purposes; many are prevailing now according to the same divine plan and rendering useful services to the humanity; many will appear in newer and newer garbs in the future. All these *Sámpradáyika Dharmas* have their honoured positions in the human society.

Every spiritual aspirant should have respect for all of them and for their founders. They represent different paths leading to the same spiritual goal. They are particularly suited to particular times and to spiritual aspirants of particular types of *sanskáras* and temperaments. Those who have adopted any particular *sampradáya* ought sincerely and earnestly to abide by its rules and regulations in order to purify their body

and mind and to elevate themselves to higher planes of spiritual consciousness. But they should not be wanting in respect for other *sampradáyas*, for that should imply the non-refinement of their own mind and heart and intellect and stand in the way of their spiritual progress. "*Sav Dharmo ko mán dená*," —the Yogiraj taught. Narrowness, bigotry, intolerance, fanaticism, hatred, animosity, disrespect for the saints and beliefs of other *sampradáyas*,—all these are anti-religious factors in the human nature. A true spiritual aspirant must rise above them in order to be worthy of spiritual enlightenment. True religion means harmony and peace within as well as harmony and peace with all. It implies the realisation of unity in all diversities. It demands universality of outlook. This is what *Sanátana Dharma* teaches.

The Yogiraj gave to his disciples a very lofty and pure idea of religion. Religion does not essentially consist in the performance of certain rituals or religious acts in some prescribed manners, or in blind obedience to certain rules and regulations enjoined in some religious scriptures, or in the cultivation of some religious emotions and sentiments, or in the intellectual acceptance of certain religious creeds or articles of faith, or in the mechanical repetition of some Divine Name for a certain number of times a day, or in metaphysical speculation about the ultimate nature of the Supreme Reality, or in the acquisition of some occult powers and visions through certain practices. Each of them, the Yogiraj would say, has got its spiritual value; but none of them is the essence of religion. Each of them contributes to the development of spirituality, when adopted as a means to it with awakened judgment (*Vichára*) and earnest spiritual yearning (*Mumukshá*). But each of them may lead to spiritual stagnation,—and sometimes even to spiritual degradation,—if it is blindly and dogmatically adhered to as an end in itself. Faith in the path is of course necessary; but the path must not be mistaken for the goal. A path is not truly a path, if it does not lead to higher and higher stages of spiritual

progress. A spiritual aspirant must always move forward in the path, must come across newer and newer spiritual experiences as he moves on, must experience greater and greater freedom from the bondages and sorrows and cares and anxieties of the world, must have more and more spiritualised outlook on all mundane affairs. A religious life should not be a static life, but a dynamic life, an ever-progressive life, a life that should not rest contented till the Ultimate Truth is realised, till the whole life is spiritualised. Religion essentially consists in the progressive spiritualisation of the entire human life, whatever may be the methods adopted, whatever may be the outer nature of the courses of self-discipline undergone, whatever may be the beliefs and sentiments studiously cultivated. Religion is meant for elevating the human nature from the physical and sensuous and lower mental planes to higher and higher spiritual planes and finally for illumining the entire human consciousness with the Divine Light and making man Divine. This is what *Sanátana Dharma* teaches.

In his instruction to the disciples, the Yogiraj Gambhirnath would strongly emphasize the necessity for the development of the power of judgment (*Vichára*) in the spiritual life no less than in the practical life. He would say,—*Vichára hi tapasyá.* By this he meant that the development and refinement of the faculty of judgment and discrimination as well as the regulation and ennoblement of all aspects of outer and inner conduct in the light of such refined and enlightened judgment should be regarded as the most important part of spiritual self-discipline. Austerities, asceticism, endurance of hardships and privations, etc., which ordinarily pass by the name of *tapasyá*, are, according to him, of much lesser value from the spiritual view-point. Illumination of the consciousness with the Light of Divinity and spiritualisation of the whole being with this Light is the end and aim of spiritual culture. For this the enlightenment of *vichára* is the chief means, and this enlightened *vichára* has to acquire strength to control and harmonise and illumine

all the aspects of life. The Yogiraj would instruct his disciples to develop and strengthen their power of independent judgment and reasoning, to refine and enlighten it, and to discipline all the aspects of their life,—their actions, speeches, desires, tastes, thoughts, emotions, beliefs and ideas,—by the power of their own enlightened judgment. The Yogiraj would not, therefore, impose any cut-and-dried rules and regulations upon his disciples, would not prohibit them from taking particular kinds of food or doing particular kinds of deeds, would not order them to utter the Divine Name for a minimum number of times or to practise any form of *sádhaná* or *upásaná* for any minimum period, would not command them to follow any particular customs or habits in their domestic or social life. Though assuming charge of their spiritual welfare, he would leave all such things to their independent judgment. When in reply to their questions he would give any instruction, it was invariably in the form of advice, only as a help to their judgment. He would never exercise any *gurudom* in relation to his disciples. But strangely enough, his disciples felt, whenever they turned inward, what a great influence the *Guru* was exercising upon their life.

While attaching great value to the development and enlightenment of the power of judgment, the Yogiraj would never undervalue Faith (*viśwása*), Devotion (*bhakti*) and Practice (*kriyá*). Faith and Devotion are the most dynamic factors in life. Faith and Devotion give men courage to undertake the most difficult and hazardous tasks. They give men patience and perseverance to stick to their duties in the face of all obstacles and hardships and dangers. In spiritual life Faith and Devotion are indispensable conditions of success. When with refined judgment the ideal of life is clearly conceived and the path for realising it is chosen, it should be pursued with undaunted faith and devotion, whatever may be the difficulties and impediments in the way. The Yogiraj would on occasions speak of the wonderful power of faith. "*Viśwás ke śakti se*

asambhav bhi sambhav hotá hai,"—he said. Faith can blow away mountains from the way of a man's progress. Faith can work out miracles. If a man can say with firm faith,—"O God, reveal Thyself in all Thy glories here and now,"—then God will immediately reveal Himself. Once, by way of illustration of the power of faith, he related a story. A devoted wife wanted to die with her husband; the police and the relatives opposed this illegal act; she then humbly prayed for permission only to lie down by the side of the dead body of her dear husband for a few minutes; this was granted. As soon as she lay down embracing her husband, fire blazed up encircling the bodies inexplicably, and water poured for extinguishing it seemed to act like *ghee*. The lady was burnt to death with a calm and smiling face. This was the power of faith, devotion and love. The Yogiraj advised his disciples to cultivate faith in, devotion to and love for, the *Guru*, the *śástras* and the Lord of the cosmic order, freely and intelligently, and not slavishly and without enlightened judgment, and he assured them of perfect success in life. "*Sav taraf achchá ho jayega*",—he said.

Faith, Devotion and Love, though they are the most valuable assets in spiritual culture, require to be progressively enlightened by refined judgment. They have to be made free from superstitions and prejudices, from sectarian narrowness and bigotry, from sensuous and materialistic factors, from attachments and emotions of the lower mind, which are not unoften associated with them and block the path of spiritual advancement. Faith, Devotion and Love have to be liberated from the bondages and impurities of the lower mental planes and elevated to higher and higher spiritual planes. They have to be so cultivated as to push the consciousness steadily and forcibly and joyfully up towards the Supreme Spirit,—towards the Infinite Eternal Universal Self. For this steady upward progress of the consciousness towards the realisation of Divinity within itself, Faith, Devotion and Love, which are dynamic factors in spiritual life, should be constantly under the

supervision and guidance of refined *vichára*, and *vichára* should progressively rise to higher and higher planes, should attempt to be more and more illumined by the Divine Light.

Yogiraj Gambhirnath used to lay special emphasis upon *jnána-vichára*, because it is often found (as he pointed out) that *sraddhá*, *bhakti*, *prema*, when unenlightened by *jnána-vichára*, bind down a spiritual aspirant to a particular God or Goddess (not conceived as the all-pervading Absolute Spirit), or to a particular Divine Name or Divine Image (without distinct awareness of the Indwelling Universal Spirit revealing Himself in the Name or the Image), or to a particular saint or prophet (blindly considered to be the sole custodian of spiritual knowledge), or to a particular system of religious discipline (ignorantly supposed to be the exclusive path to the spiritual goal). When Faith, Devotion and Love tie down the mind to any such finite reality, they create serious obstacles in the way of spiritual illumination. Such dangers should be averted by a spiritual truth-seeker with the help of *jnána-vichára*. The Yogiraj would never give any indulgence to blind emotionalism or sentimentalism on the part of his disciples, or to any kind of superstitious belief or narrow-minded prejudice or slavish subservience in spiritual life.

According to the teachings of the Yogiraj, the life of a spiritual truth-seeker is required to be an energetic life, a life of strong determination, strong self-confidence, strong faith, strong devotion to and love for the ideal, and at the same time a life of sweet calmness and tranquillity and a life of ever-awake reflection and contemplation. He has to conquer the forces of his lower nature; he has to subdue the forces of disharmony and disquietude in his physical, sensuous and mental nature; he has to rescue his consciousness from the domination of these forces and to raise it to higher and higher planes of spiritual tranquillity and illumination and joy. Hence he has to heroically exert himself against the worldly forces for the establishment of the Divine Kindom upon his whole conscious life.

It is with such a high spiritual ideal of life and with a strong determination to realise it that an aspirant should offer himself to the *Guru* for safe guidance to the goal.

Self-surrender to the *Guru* should not imply spiritual lethargy or shaking off the aspirant's own responsibility for *sádhaná* or self-exertion. Any such idea would mean want of spiritual aspiration on his part. The *Guru* takes charge of guiding him safely to the ideal, of making his path easier and smoother and sweeter, of progressively illumining his consciousness with the Divine Light always shining within himself; but the disciple in his conscious rational life must play his part properly and energetically in accordance with the enlightening instruction of the *Guru*. The Yogiraj, though talking so softly and sweetly and in so few words, would always try (so to say) to inspire the truth-seekers with a sense of strength, dignity, self-confidence and responsibility in their spiritual life as well as in their worldly life. He would advise them not to be anxious about the ultimate results, which should be firmly believed to be quite secure in the hands of God or the *Guru*. He would instruct them not to brood over their past life nor to be anxious about the future, but to march onward in accordance with the direction of their own refined judgment as well as in the light of the direction obtained from the *Guru* and the *sástras*. For the refinement of their own judgment, he would say, they should look to the *Guru*, *sástras* and the recognised saints for guidance.

One of the basic instructions, which the Yogiraj used to repeat almost to every disciple after initiation, was, —"Make no distinction among Deities or Gods; They are really all one; They differ only in names and forms, but not in reality; the same one Absolute Spirit reveals Himself in a variety of names and forms and special glorious characteristics and thus appears as Deities; a truth-seeker or God-seeker ought to see the same God or Absolute Spirit in them all." This is, he pointed out, one of the fundamental teachings of *Sanátana Dharma*. The Absolute Spirit is essentially without any special name or special form.

He cannot even be adequately conceived in terms of any special qualities or powers, howsoever glorious. This nameless, formless, attributeless Absolute Spirit can be realised as such in the deepest spiritual experience, when the consciousness transcends the domain of duality and plurality, the domain of time, space, causality and relativity, the domain of all kinds of difference, and becomes perfectly illumined by and identified with the Absolute Spirit. This is the supreme end of *sádhaná*. In the lower planes of consciousness the transcendent unity of the Absolute Spirit is veiled, and the sense of difference prevails. The purpose which every spiritual aspirant should have in view at every stage of his religious self-discipline is progressively to get rid of the sense of difference and to advance towards the realisation of the spiritual unity of all existences and ultimately to be perfectly united with the Absolute Spirit. In actual practice it becomes inevitable that the as-yet unillumined mind should form some conception of the Absolute Spirit in terms of some glorious powers and attributes, should associate some name with the Spirit as conceived, and should give expression to the conception in the form of some image. It is quite natural that the conceptions of the Inconceivable in the diverse human minds should vary, that the names and images of the Nameless and Formless should be many. In this way a good many Deities have been conceived to bring the Absolute Spirit within the range of comprehension of the human mind.

The Yogiraj taught that these diverse Deities,—Gods and Goddesses,—need not be and should not be discarded as false or worthless, on the ground that they do not exist as separate independent Realities or Persons, but are only appearances of the same Supreme Spirit in different names and forms. At the time of spiritual self-discipline the human mind must take the help of some chosen name and form and concept. Discarding all names and forms would lead the mind to void or blank universality or some abstract concept, which cannot be expected to elevate consciousness to higher planes of

spiritual illumination. As some name and form is necessary for the *sádhaka* in the mental plane to give him a concrete idea of the Supreme Spirit, similar other names and forms adopted by other *sádhakás* ought also to be respected. These Deities, though differing chiefly in names and forms and mental concepts, should not be regarded as false or altogether non-existent in the mental plane. They ought to be regarded as relatively or phenomenally real by the truth-seeking mind. But the mind in its search for the Ultimate Truth should train itself to think of them as diverse appearances of the same Supreme Spirit, to recognise the shining presence of the same Supreme Spirit in them, and not to make any distinction among them or to regard some as superior or inferior to others. An earnest spiritual aspirant should try to feel and enjoy the majestic and beautiful presence of his own Supreme Object of devotion and love in the name and image of every God and Goddess adored in the human society. Thus the *sádhaka* should from the very beginning free his mind from sectarian bias and narrowness, attach less importance to the particular names and forms through which the Supreme Spirit reveals Himself as well as veils His transcendent infinite eternal character, and with refined judgment and contemplation enlighten his consciousness for perceiving the all-pervading self-luminous presence of the Supreme Object of his devotion and love. Having formed the habit of seeing the same Absolute Spirit gloriously revealed and embodied in all Gods and Goddesses of all sects and communities, a *sádhaka* should train his mind to see Him revealed in all His glorious self-manifestations (*vibhuti*) in nature as well as in human personalities. With brighter and brighter illumination of his consciousness the *sádhaka* should see the Supreme Spirit shining brilliantly in all existences as well as within himself.

The Yogiraj used to say with some emphasis,—"*Rup bahut hai, Swarup ek hi hai; sav hi Paramátmá-swarup.*"—Forms are many, but the essential Reality is one; *Paramátmá* (Supreme Spirit)

is the essential Reality of all. Religion means the systematic endeavour to realise in direct experience this essential spiritual oneness of all the diverse forms of existences. God-realisation means the realisation of the one Supreme Spirit as the essential Truth of all the apparently diverse kinds of phenomenal realities of our normal and abnormal and supernormal experiences. So long as the sense of difference is predominating in the mind, so long as the differences of forms are deliberately accepted by the mind as differences of realities, the mind is in the domain of Ignorance. The essence of spiritual culture lies in the earnest and systematic attempt to transcend this domain of Ignorance and to see the one *Paramátmá* in all. Progress in religious life is to be measured by the progress in the realisation of the spiritual unity underlying the diversities of the world, by the development of the spirituality and the consequent universality of outlook in dealing with all the phenomena of experience. It is the realisation of one *Paramátmá* as the Truth of all existences, —the realisation of the same self-existent, self-luminous, blissful Spirit as shining within the body and the mind and in all men and animals and natural forces and material objects,—that alone can give perfect peace and joy to human life. It is with a view to this realisation that all religious rules and regulations have been prescribed by the *śástras* and the enlightened *Gurus* according to the stages of development of the spiritual aspirants. All forms of worship, all forms of moral self-discipline, all religious rites and ceremonies, all customs and habits, all beliefs and sentiments, all studies and contemplations, should be directed towards this supreme spiritual end. Consciousness has to rise to higher and higher planes, to become more and more purified and refined, in order to attain fitness for this truth-realisation,—for seeing *Paramátmá* in the self and all,— for being perfectly identified with the Truth.

Yogiraj Gambhirnath instructed his disciples to be non-sectarian, non-communal, non-dogmatic, non-fanatic, in their religious outlook for their own unobstructed spiritual advance-

ment. He wanted them to elevate their consciousness to the plane of cosmopolitanism and universalism from the spiritual point of view. He taught them to see the same *Paramátmá* not only in all Gods and Goddesses and in all classes of people, but also in all creatures and all objects of nature. He advised them to cultivate all-embracing love,—love for all and hatred of none. But he would not approve of any violent revolt against the social restrictions in their practical life. He instructed the disciples and truth-seekers to abide by the general laws and customs which might be prevalent in the societies and communities to which they belonged, in matters of food, marriage and other forms of social behaviour, though these laws and customs might be based on the sense of difference, and might not be fully justifiable in the light of enlightened judgment. Differences there must be in all societies and communities and in all human organisations, in all ages and countries, just as there must be differences within the cosmic order. Laws and customs, rules and regulations, are meant for bringing about and maintaining harmony and peace in the midst of these differences. These laws and customs, rules and regulations, are also different in different societies and communities, and they are changing and taking newer and newer forms in due course. Societies and communities, in order to adjust themselves with the changing circumstances of the world, must change their laws and customs. None of these social and communal laws and customs should be regarded as *sanátana* (permanent). For introducing revolutionary changes, when necessary, specially gifted persons with divinely appointed misssion are born. Spiritual aspirants should in ordinary course follow the prevailing customs and laws, as they find them, in their practical life, but should not attach undue religious value to them. While, for practical purposes, observing the social and communal customs which are based on the sense of difference between man and man, spiritual aspirants should inwardly transcend them with the help of refined *vichàra* and form the inner habit

to dwell in the realm of spiritual unity and equality. The Yogiraj gave them the formula,—'*Samadarśi bano, samavarti nahi,*' —see the equality and oneness of all, but do not try to be equal to all in outer behaviour.

The Yogiraj did not lend his support to the view that inter-dining, intermarriage and such other outer demonstrations would in any way help the removal of the inequalities between men and men and the establishment of peace, harmony, equality and unity in the human society. According to him what is of utmost importance is the refinement of inner character in men and the development of spiritual outlook. In his instructions to the truth-seekers he would always lay emphasis upon refined *vichára*, enlightened mode of thinking, looking upon men and things from the spiritual standpoint, moulding all thoughts, desires and feelings in accordance with the spiritual ideal of life, raising the consciousness to higher and higher planes of unity. If the inner character is spiritualised, all the problems of outer life are easily solved. If men are trained in the spiritual way of thinking, they themselves feel that their own spiritual self-development requires treatment to all as equals, real sympathy and fellow-feeling for all, sacrifice of selfish interests for the good of all, service to all in a spirit of worship to *Paramátmá* embodied in them. The awakenment of the spiritual urge latent in all men would as a matter of course bring about peace, harmony, equality, unity and beauty in the human society.

With regard to the rules of outer conduct, the Yogiraj would in general terms instruct the truth-seekers to follow the universal principles of *Yama* and *Niyama*. Of these again he would lay special stress upon truthfulness, honesty in dealings with all men, charity, and not looking at and speaking of the dark sides of others. All these should be practised in thought, word and deed. In this way the whole nature should be purified, so that consciousness may attain fitness for spiritual enlightenment. He wanted the spiritual aspirants to practise charity

(according to their capacity) to the poor and the distressed as well as to the world-renouncing *sádhus* as a form of worship to the Lord. He would specially warn them against speaking ill of others (*para-nindá*) and cherishing any ill-feeling or ill-will against others (*vaira-bháva*).

Yogiraj Gambhirnath accepted the earnest spiritual truth-seekers into his discipleship by instilling into their ears some *mantra* which he advised them to keep secret. The *mantra* consists of some Divine Name with words implying a spirit of complete self-offering to the Lord and the *Guru*. He would say that the *mantra* is surcharged with spiritual energy and that it has in it the power to lead the disciple through all the stages of spiritual development to the ultimate goal of spiritual perfection, if properly cultivated with faith, devotion, love, purity and earnestness. He seemed to have infused his own spiritual power into the *mantra* for the progressive elevation and enlightenment of the inner character of the disciples. For special spiritual practice he instructed the disciples chiefly to repeat the Divine Name (as obtained in the *mantra*) in the mind as often as possible, to remember the spirit of the *mantra* under all conditions of life, to develop faith in, devotion to and love for, the Divine Name and to try to feel the shining presence of the Divine Spirit in the Divine Name. He gave them the assurance that if they could only stick to the Divine Name with faith, devotion, love, purity and an earnest prayerful mood, the Name by dint of its own spiritual power would gradually enlighten their consciousness, would gradually release them from the weaknesses, wickednesses and darknesses of their lower nature, would gradually bring peace, harmony and sweetness and joy into their life, and would make their whole being fit for receiving the self-shining Divine Light. The Yogiraj instructed the disciples not to make any distinction between the Divine Name and the Divine Spirit (*Náma* and *Námi*). The Name is the verbal embodiment of the Spirit. It should be conceived as the Supreme Spirit Himself revealed in a verbal form, just as a Divine Image

is to be conceived as the Supreme Spirit revealed in a material form. Moreover, the Name, being spiritualised by the *Guru*, becomes wholly identified with the Divine Spirit. With every utterance or remembrance of the Divine Name, the spiritual aspirant should try to feel the living touch of the Divine Spirit. *Náma-Japa* (repetition of the Divine Name) should not be converted into a mechanical process of the tongue. It should be a living process of remembrance of the Lord by the conscious mind with attention and love.

The Yogiraj would caution his disciples against erroneously thinking that the Name with which they were initiated was the name of any particular Deity with particular qualifications and particular bodily forms, as distinguished from other Deities with other distinctive qualifications and forms. He would always exhort them to shake off all such narrow sectarian ideas from their minds. The Divine Name is the Name of the one Supreme Spirit, Who is the Soul and Lord of the universe and Who reveals Himself in countless names and forms. Siva, Vishnu, Brahma, Kali, Durgá, Ráma, Krishna, etc., are all adorable Names, signifying the same Supreme Spirit, Who in His transcendent character is above all names and forms. With whatever sacred Name a *sádhaka* may be initiated into the path of spiritual self-discipline and self-enlightenment, he should always contemplate the same one infinite and eternal, all-transcending and all-pervading, self-luminous and all-illumining, Supreme Spirit, as the true *meaning* of that Name. The meaning of the Divine Name or the *mantra* is not determined by the meaning of the words.

The Divine Name is the most potent instrument for bridging over the *máyika* gulf of difference between the human mind and the Absolute Spirit, if the Name is properly conceived by refined *vichára*. The human mind has to make conscious effort to get rid of the sorrowful bondage of all names and forms with the effective help of the spiritualised and dynamised Divine Name, so mercifully instilled into it by the *Guru*. The Divine Name

should unite the human mind perfectly with the Divine Spirit, unless the mind foolishly obstructs the passage by voluntarily cherishing in pure, narrow, superstitious ideas and attachments. An open, pure, earnest, truth-seeking mind is necessary for the Divine Name effectively unfolding Its inner powers, progressively illumining the mind and bringing about the most blissful union of the mind with the Absolute Spirit.

It has already been noticed that the Yogiraj would not impose his will or command upon the outer conduct of his disciples. He would not interfere with their freedom of judgment and freedom of action. In the matter of daily spiritual practice also he would prescribe no compulsory rules and regulations. He had the most deeply compassionate sympathy for their mental and moral weaknesses and their worldly obligagations. He knew that the time at their disposal for special spiritual practice was short and that this short time also they would not be able to utilise fully on account of their weaknesses. Hence having blessed them with initiation, he would leave them almost completely free to develop their character and conduct in their own way by the free exercise of their power of judgment and will. He would guide them in their advancement from within.

With respect to *Náma-japa* (repetition of the Divine Name), he would say that they might remember the Name in the morning and the evening for one hour or half an hour or a quarter of an hour or five minitures or for any period according to their convenience. No minimum number of times was fixed. Telling the beads was unnecessary. Sitting in any special posture was unessential. Every *sádhaka* should use his own option. Any form of ceremonial worship was also optional. Whatever time any spiritual aspirant might devote to the practice of *Náma-japa* together with any form of *pujá* or any other spiritual exercise, it was expected that it should be done with faith, love, deep attention and sincere aspiration for spiritual elevation. Without sincere and earnest spiritual aspiration,

going to any *Guru* was meaningless,—the Yogiraj was sometimes heard to say. The Yogiraj would count upon the earnestness and right judgment of the disciples.

While making spiritual practice so very easy for worldly men and women and even children, he would not fail to draw their attention to the ideal form of *Náma-sádhaná.* The Divine Name should be remembered and contemplated *with every breath*, and It should be so constantly attended to that the Divine Spirit embodied in It should be converted, as it were, into the breath of life. Not a single breath should be allowed to go out or to go in without being associated with the Divine Name. It would virtually mean constant meditation on the Supreme Spirit. The consciousness should be absorbed with and illumined by Him.

The Yogiraj was asked by some disciples whether *Náma-sádhaná* was enough for spiritual enlightenment, or such other forms of *sádhaná* as *pránáyáma, dhyána*, etc., were necessary. The Yogiraj gently suggested that if they practised *Náma-sádhaná*, as instructed, with faith, devotion, purity, love and earnestness for some time, the question would gradually vanish, because experience would teach them that all other necessary forms of *sádhaná* are involved in it and are in due course evolved out of it. It should be remembered that the *Guru* enlivens and invigorates the Divine Name given to the disciple with his own perfectly awakened spiritual power, which gradually reveals itself in the consciousness of the disciple with the progress of his practice. The disciple has to receive this potent Divine Name into his mind with implicit faith and devotion and to form the habit of remembering It, as often and as deeply as his capacity and circumstances allow, with purity, love and earnest spiritual aspiration.

As with practice the association between the Name and the mind becomes closer and closer, the Name by virtue of It, spiritual power gradually changes the nature of the minds frees it from its diverse worldward tendencies and attachments

to objects of sense-enjoyments, transforms and spiritualises its outlook and mode of thinking, concentrates its attention more and more deeply towards spiritual illumination, raises it to higher and higher planes till its union with the Divine Spirit is accomplished. It is evident that the more deeply the mind feels attracted to the Divine Name embodying the Divine Spirit, the more does it become naturally calm and tranquil and concentrated, the more does it become free from worldly thoughts and desires and cares and anxieties, the more do the functions of the bodily organs, the sense-organs and the nervous system become regulated and harmonised, the more do the breaths become rhythmical and deep. The entire psycho-physical organism is progressively concentrated on the Divine Name. With the progress of concentration the Divine Name is almost unnoticeably relieved of the *sound-element* which constitutes Its outer embodiment and unveils Itself as the self-shining Divine Spirit and illumines the whole consciousness. The consciousness then loses its sense of separateness from the Supreme Spirit and becomes one with Him. Thus a *Náma-sádhaka* passes through the whole course of *Yoga-sádhaná* without any conscious attention to and artificial practice of its particular *angas* (limbs). The Yogiraj, with a few words of explanation, would advise his disciples to cultivate faith in and devotion to the Name and to pursue *Námá-sádhaná* with earnestness, assuring them that all things would come in due course,—"*Náma se sav kuch ho jáigá.*"

It has been remarked that the Yogiraj, though reputed to be the greatest expert of his time in *Hatha-yoga* and *Rája-yoga*, would not give lessons on these processes to his disciples. He would say that in these days there were few persons who were physically, temperamentally and morally fit (*adhikári*) for the sustained practice of esoteric *Hatha-yoga* leading to spiritual illumination. Some people might learn a few simple practices for some time, acquire some occult powers and visions, mistake them for spiritual attainments, get puffed up with vanity and

arrogance, and make a show of them. Such little learning in *Hatha-yoga* would generally result in their spiritual suicide. Householders, who were pressed down by worldly obligations, were particularly warned against adopting that path. The Yogiraj would speak of the *Bhakti-path* as the most suitable for the spiritual aspirants of the present age. But *Bhakti-sádhana* should not be confused with mere sentimentalism or emotionalism in the name of religion, just as *Yoga-sádhana* should not be confused with some specific exercises of the body and the breath and the psychic powers and the cultivation of some supernormal knowledge and capacity. *Bhakti*, though laying greater stress upon the emotional elements, such as faith, admiration, reverence, love, devotion, etc., must be purified and enlightened and freed from superstition, prejudice, narrowness and too much emotionalism and ritualism, by the cultivation of refined judgment (*tattwa-vichára*), and must be concentrated (*yoga-yukta*) upon the Supreme Spirit, with calmness and tranquillity. *Náma-sádhana*, as instructed, is the easiest, safest and most effective form of *Bhakti-sádhana*, in which both *Jnána* and *Yoga* are involved.

At every stage of *sádhaná* a *sádhaka* should cultivate an attitude of self-offering to the Lord and try to free his mind from egoism (*ahamkára*), from *Me* and *Mine*. "*Mai* (*I*) *nahi rakhná*,"—Ego should not be nourished,—the Yogiraj used to say. The Ego is the central pillar of bondage. The Ego should be surrendered to the Supreme Spirit for being illumined. The cultivation of the spirit of self-surrender to the Lord is the most effective factor of *Bhakti-sádhana* and is the surest means to liberation from the bondage of the world. The Lord should be contemplated as the sole Master of the body and the worldly environments.

While prescribing *Bhakti-sádhana*,—and particularly *Náma-sádhana*,—as the most suitable form of spiritual practice for the generality of spiritual aspirants of the present age under the existing circumstances, the Yogiraj would clearly point out

that without *jnána* there can be no *mukti* (*'Jnána viná mukti nahi hoti'*). By *jnána* he meant the perfect illumination and spiritualisation of the consciousness, in which the individual consciousness becomes wholly identified with the Universal Consciousness, in which the individual ego wholly loses its sense of separateness from the Supreme Spirit (*Paramátmá*), in which the consciousness fully realises that the One Infinite Eternal Absolute Spirit is the sole Reality,—the sole Truth of the self and the universe. The fulfilment of all forms of *sádhana* is in this *jnána*. It is this *jnána* which alone gives the individual final *mukti*, *i.e.*, perfect liberation from all possible bondages of the world, from all possible cares and anxieties and fears and sorrows.

Mukti cannot be attained as the result of any *karma* or action, however good and noble and meritorious. It cannot be conferred upon a man as a favour by any person, howsoever enlightened and possessed of *yogic* powers. The Yogiraj once tauntingly said that 'it cannot be converted into a drink and poured into the mouth of the disciple by any *Guru*.' But if a man sincerely and earnestly wants to get rid of the sorrows and bondages of the world and is prepared to devote whatever energy he has got to the self-discipline necessary for it, and if with this end in view he surrenders himself to the *Guru*, the *Guru* can guide him on, can make his path easy, can progressively transform and enlighten his consciousness and ultimately bless him with that supreme spiritual illumination, in which he can himself directly experience this blissful *mukti*. *Mukti* is that experience itself, and not some object that can be given or taken. It is the elevation of the consciousness to the transcendent state,—to the state of Super-consciousness,—to the state of an *Avadhuta*.

Yogiraj Gambhirnath, while imparting spiritual teaching to his disciples who were mostly householders, would advise them not to be neglectful of their important domestic and social obligations. He would not encourage their impulsive

tendencies to adopt the *sanyása* life, save in exceptional cases. He would say that due performance of essential worldly duties is in no way incompatible with intensive spiritual culture. Only the mental attitude towards these duties and the manner of performing them should be changed. There were many great *jnánis*, *bhaktas* and *yogis* among the householders in the past. The householders of the present age also should not be self-diffident and should not lose the hope of spiritual illumination on account of their pressing domestic and social duties. It has to be remembered that these duties are entrusted to them by *Paramátmá*,—by the Lord of their soul and the Lord of the universe. These duties ought, therefore, to be accepted as very sacred and to be performed with a pure heart, a pure body and enlightened judgment. They should be conceived as particular forms of worship to *Paramátmá* and performed honestly, conscientiously and diligently with a spirit of devotion in the mind. Works should thus be sublimated, spiritualised and converted into worship. The motive behind the faithful performance of all the sacred domestic and social duties should be spiritual self-purification and self-elevation. If the spiritual aspiration remains strong in the mind, there should be no undue attachment to particular actions and no cares or anxieties about the particular worldly consequences of those actions. God's work should be performed with devotion to and love for God in the heart and its results should be left in the care of God. The mind, with faith in and reliance upon the Lord, being free from desires for, attachments to and anxieties about, the worldly consequences of the actions performed, enjoys calmness and tranquillity even in the midst of the most complicated duties. The worldly relations, such relations as between husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters, neighbours and neighbours, etc., are really divinely ordered spiritual relations, and their mutual obligations also are essentially spiritual. Duties, when looked upon and discharged from the spiritual point of view, do not become sources of bondage and

sorrow and create no hindrances in the path of spiritual illumination of the consciousness. Householders have to learn to be true householders in the Divine world in accordance with the enlightening principles of *Sanátana Dharma*, and then they can enjoy peace and joy even in the worldly life. They should try to remember the Divine Name amidst all their works, and the Divine Name will save them from all complications.

It has often been observed that the Yogiraj exhorted his disciples chiefly to rely on their own *vichára* for the spiritual elevation of their character and conduct, and that he advised them to refine and enlighten their *vichára* in the light of the teachings of the *Guru*, the *sástras* and other trustworthy saints and sages. Among all the *sástras* he gave the most important place to *Srimad-Bhagavad-Gita*. He instructed his disciples to study the *Gita* with special attention, to believe it as the Word of God, and to refine and enlighten their judgment in the light of this universal scripture. He described the *Gita* as the true book for all ages,—"*Sav yugo ke liye satya grantha.*" The true spirit of *Sanátana Dharma* is most powerfully and most beautifully revealed in the *Gita*. This one book is enough for the spiritual truth-seekers,—"*Ek Gita Bahut*",—said the Yogiraj.

CHAPTER XIII

THE LAST YEARS IN THE PHYSICAL BODY

Since the time Yogiraj Gambhirnath had come down to accept the position of a *Sad-Guru* and begun to give spiritual shelter at his feet to the earnest seekers of true spiritual life, he lived, as it has been mentioned before, hardly eight years in his mortal frame. During this period he rarely moved out of the Gorakhpur station and the compound of the Gorakhnath Temple. The Gorakhnath Temple, which had been a place of pilgrimage to all classes of religious-minded Hindus —and particularly to the mendicants and the admirers of the *Náth-yogi Sampradáya*,—for many centuries, became during these years, a place of special attraction to the truth-seekers of all sects on account of his presence. It was visited by men and women, ascetics and householders, old and young, rich and poor, learned scholars as well as illiterate peasants and labourers, throughout all the seasons of the year. Many of them saw in him the immortal Sage and Man-God Gorakhnath, the incarnation of *Śiva*, revealing himself in a physical body again, out of love and mercy to the people of this age suffering from want of faith in and regard for religion, from loss of spiritual consciousness and forgetfulness of the spiritual ideal of human life.

He had no mission; he had no organisation ; he had no ardour or enthusiasm for giving moral or religious instruction; he had no vanity of diffusing spiritual light in the country or the world; he had no idea of preaching true religion to the people of the age and destroying their ignorance or superstition; he had no sense of responsibility in the matter of creating a spiritual atmosphere in the society and making men spiritually minded. But the very sight of his face would create in the

minds of the observers an unquestioning faith in the reality of a spiritual world, an awakened consciousness of the spiritual ideal of human life, a living sense of the infinite, eternal, blissful spiritual existence. Many thoughtful observers remarked that to see him was to see the Infinite in a finite body, to see the Eternal Changeless Being in a transitory changing form, to experience an undisturbed blissful stillness of an unknown world reigning over and silencing, as it were, the clamours and thunders and the cries of agony of the world of our normal experience. Many persons who had lost faith in God and the other world and imbibed a scoffing attitude towards all religions, happened to come to him either by chance or out of sheer curiosity and became converted into staunch believers by the mere sight of his tranquil face and mysterious eyes. Many sceptics came to him with the purpose of putting to him a number of puzzling questions carefully prepared beforehand, but to their utter amazement they found that all the questions vanished from their minds in his presence, and it seemed to them that his supra-mundane mystical appearance was itself an adequate answer to all their questions. People saw him and became willingly conquered by him.

In this way the spiritualising mission of his earthly existence went on fulfilling itself, without any plan or design on his part and apparently without even any awareness of his own. The educated Bengali youths,—and especially those who had a spiritual yearning within their hearts, but had lost faith in the truth of the current dogmas and the spiritual value of the old ritualistic forms of worship and the prevailing customs of initiation by *Kula-guru* (hereditary *gurus* of particular families),—seemed to be specially attracted by him. They were deeply indebted to the illustrious religious teacher and reformer Vijoy Krishna Goswami and his disciples for getting informations about the Yogiraj's extraordinary spiritual greatness. It is the earnestness of these Bengali youths which may be said to have brought him down to the plane of *Guruship*. Form 1910 they

went on assembling round his feet in larger and larger numbers. During the *Durga Pujá* and *Daśahará* Holidays in Autumn, when all schools and colleges and courts and offices in Bengal remained closed for about a month, the Gorakhnath Temple became almost transformed into a "*Bengali Babus' áśram.*" The disciples and the applicants for discipleship would assemble there in large numbers during these holidays and enjoy the peace of *áśram* life in the presence of the *Guru*. The *Guru* would take charge of their food and shelter and comfort and make all arrangements for them in his own inimitable way. The disciples were the guests of Gorakhnath, so long as they put up in the *áśram*, and the *Guru*, as the representative of Gorakhnath, was their host. They were during these days free from all kinds of worries and troubles. They appeared to be dwelling in a different world altogether. They tasted the fearless tranquil joy of living in the world of the *Guru*,—the world of the loving and merciful Lord. They were taught how free from mental worries and troubles and fears and anxieties and how full of joy and peace and tranquillity they could become even in their own houses and places of business, if within their hearts they could feel that there also they were dwelling in the *Guru's* world, if they could bear in mind that what they in their foolish vanity imagined to be their own houses and permanent abodes were also included in the Lord's world, supervised and managed by Him from behind the veil of their ignorance, and that there also the loving and merciful eyes of the Omnipotent and Omniscient Divine *Guru* were constantly upon them just as they were in this *áśram*.

On one occasion some disciples, while taking leave of him at the end of their sojourn in the *áśram*, incidentally told him how free and happy they were during these days and drew a contrast between their life in his proximity and life at a distance from him. They also prayed earnestly for his keeping merciful eyes upon them, even while they were out of his sight. The *Guru* with a slightly smiling look opened his placid lips and

with a gentle hope-offering gesture of his right hand whispered to them,—"*Proximity* and *distance* are nothing but concepts of the mind; in truth you are never out of the sight of your *Guru*; don't forget the *Guru*, have full trust in Him, and you will feel that the *Guru* is always with you, wherever you may be, and that He is constantly taking care of you; if you can cultivate the habit of thinking yourselves always residing in the house of the Lord, even while you are in your places of business, you can enjoy the same freedom from cares and anxieties, the same internal joy and peace and tranquillity as in this *áśram* of *Nathji*." Yogiraj used to instruct his disciples to live their domestic and social lives courageously, fearlessly, optimistically, honestly and intelligently, with the consciousness that they were of the Lord, that their friends and enemies, their relatives and rivals, their masters and servants, all whom they came in contact with, were of the Lord, and that their enjoyments and sufferings, their gains and losses, their rises and falls, were all determined by the Omnipotent will of the all-just, all-merciful, ever-vigilant Lord. He told them that if they were true to the Lord, true to the *Guru*, they would have nothing to be afraid of in this world, because the Lord governed all physical circumstances as well as the minds of all people.

The name and the spiritual greatness of Yogiraj Gambhirnath gained wider and wider publicity through his disciples and admirers, who had the good fortune to come in direct contact with him. Their firsthand evidence, added to what had been previously heard, intensified the curiosities of innumerable men and women of different corners of Bengal for having a *Darśan* of him. Many of them had an eager desire to be blessed with initiation from him. Those who had means to go to Gorakhpur secured permission from the Yogiraj through intermediaries and started as soon as they could manage. But there were many others, who, either for want of money or for want of independence or owing to various difficulties, could not, in spite of their earnestness, manage to go up to Gorakhpur

to receive the longed-for blessings from the Yogiraj. Gorakhpur was not within their reach. Prayers went forth from their hearts for the Yogiraj's coming down to Bengal at least once out of pity for them. The disciples tried to persuade him to fulfil the eager wishes of so many sincere seekers of spiritual light. But it was incompatible with the Yogiraj's principle of outer conduct to go forward to any place on a preaching or teaching mission. He calmly refused to move from his permanent seat, —the seat where the Lord had placed him for the time being. In response to the prayers, which were communicated to him, of the helpless men and women of different corners of Bengal, he would gently say that those who were destined to receive the Divine Grace through him would somehow or other come in contact with him in the proper time, and that the Lord in His mercy to them would devise suitable means for it. Though so very soft and amiable and loving in all his dealings with all sorts of men and women, and even with brutes and worms, he would never be dislodged from his principle of conduct in the slightest degree by any amount of persuasion. The future was of course distinctly present before his mind; but he would not give out the secret to anybody, for it was another principle of his conduct not to give any expression to his occult knowledge and power.

In 1914 an occasion presented itself, of course in accordance with what the Yogiraj would call the Divine plan. A cataract was discovered in his eyes and in one of the eyes it was found mature for surgical operation. The disciples and admirers as well as the *sádhus* insisted that he must move to Calcutta for the best medical help. In such matters he would submit to the ordinary codes of good conduct of the men of the world. As it was against his principle to make use of *yogic* powers (except in exceptional cases) in the field of mundane duties and services and enjoyments and sufferings, so was it against his principle not to follow the general codes of good conduct recognised as such in the society and not to adopt appropriate methods and

means—appropriate from the worldly view-point—in dealing with the problems of worldly life. Just as a man should take proper food, when hungry, so should he place himself under proper medical treatment, when attacked by any disease. If attacked by any enemy, a man should take effective steps for self-defence and may even have recourse to violence, when indispensable. When in danger, he would exert himself and invoke proper aid to avert it. A man with domestic and social responsibilities should perform the duties of his position in the decent way, should make honest efforts to earn money for that purpose and should resort to suitable means for acquitting himself creditably as a noble, honest, active, courageous, high-minded and large-hearted man of the world. But within his heart and mind he should always feel and remember that his life and destiny, the successes and failures of his efforts, the enjoyments and sufferings of himself and all others and all the circumstances of the world are wholly and solely in the hands of the loving and merciful Lord, that he and all the creatures of the universe are of the Lord, and the Lord is wakefully and actively guiding and ruling them all from within as well as from above. This was Yogiraj Gambhirnath's practical instruction to all men of action in the world, and this was the principle he himself followed in his practical life.

Life and death, health and disease, wealth and poverty, honour and insult, were all the same to Yogiraj Gambhirnath, who was inwardly enjoying the supreme bliss of incessant communion with the Divine Spirit, Whom he realised as his own true Self and the true Self of the universe. To his outer consciousness all these dualities appeared like "dreams within dreams"; he transcended them all in his inner consciousness. His calmness and tranquillity were not in the least perturbed by any disease, by any physical pain, by any kind of bodily troubles or afflictions. As he had no attachment to bodily life and comfort, so he had no attachment to outer vision. Blindness was certainly no terror to him, for his inward vision

would not be blurred thereby. But still, when the doctors of Gorakhpur, the well-wishers of the *áśram*, the *sádhus* of the *sampradáya* as well as his disciples and admirers insisted that his cataract was mature for surgical operation and that the operation must be undergone in Calcutta, where the help of the most expert surgeons would be available, the Yogiraj as a meek and gentle patient submitted to their advice and expressed his readiness to take the journey.

But it was not to his liking that so much *áśram-money* should be spent for the treatment of his eyes. The *áśram* property belonged to *Nathji* (the Lord) and therefore to the *sádhus* and the poor. The money that was offered to the Lord ought to be dedicated to the worship of the Lord and, as an essential part of this worship, to the service of the *sádhus* who had renounced all personal property for devoting their time and energy exclusively to spiritual self-discipline, and to the service of the people in distress, who should be regarded as the Lord's people or as the Lord Himself in disguised forms. People without money should be given as much comfort as possible with the money of the Lord. This was the principle on which the Yogiraj based the affairs of the *áśram*. Of what value were his eyes, that for their sake so much money should be spent ? Would it not amount to robbing the poor people of their legitimate share ?

The Bengali disciples of the Yogiraj also did not like the idea that the expenses of their *Guru Maharaja* going to and staying in Bengal for his treatment should be met from the *áśram* funds or from the contributions of non-Bengalis. Though most of his disciples were poor—for in the matter of initiation also he bestowed his mercy specially upon the poor,—they undertook to bear all the expenses. While they were trying to collect money from among themselves, one of the disciples, who could in no way be called a very rich man and was at that time under some unusual pecuniary difficulties, got an inspiration from within that he should undertake to bear the

whole burden of the *Guru's* treatment on this occasion. He naturally considered himself particularly fortunate,—a special favourite of the *Guru*, so to say,—on receiving, as he believed, this Divine Command to serve the *Guru*. He at once made all the necessary arrangements. The brother-disciples were persuaded to allow him this special privilege.

On one auspicious day Yogiraj Gambhirnath started for Calcutta. A pretty big party accompanied him. Bábá Brahmanathji, one of his earliest monastic disciples, who was then the chief *pujári* (worshipper) of *Nathji* (the Lord of the Temple) and afterwards the *Mohunt* of the Gorakhnath Temple, joined the party in order to have the opportunity of serving the person of the *Guru* on this special occasion. Brahmachári Kalinath, a Bengali Brahman, who after early retirement from Government service dedicated his whole life to the service of the *Guru* and obtained the sacred privilege of looking after his personal comforts day in and day out for a good many years, followed him like a shadow. There were other *sádhus* and disciples in the company.

To his Bengali *bhaktas*, many of whom were acquainted only with his name and glories and were eager for his *darśan* and holy touch, the cataract in his eyes was only a Divinely planned contrivance for bringing him down to Calcutta and fulfilling their long-cherished desire. Many earnest truth-seekers, who had been praying for initiation from him, but had not the means to go to Gorakhpur, were full of joy at the thought that the prayers of their hearts were granted. As soon as they heard that the Yogiraj was coming down to Calcutta, they made preparations for presenting themselves to him.

Yogiraj was received at the station by a good many *bhaktas* of Calcutta. He first went with the party to *Gorakh-Bánsali* of Dum-Dum, a suburb of Calcutta. It is an *áśram* of the *Náth-yogi sampradáya* and a centre of *Náth-yogi* culture in Bengal. Having first paid his respects to the early *Gurus* of the sect, who

had established this *áśram* and the saints who had sanctified the place with their spiritual culture and realisation, the Yogiraj removed to a commodious building in the city proper, which was rented for him and his party.

On the day they first entered the house, sweets were distributed among all present according to a long-standing custom, which was approved by the *Guruji* himself. The house was immediately converted into a veritable *áśram*. An *áśram* (seat) in the central hall on the upper storey was allotted to the Yogiraj. As it was usual with him, he sat on the same seat almost throughout the day in his meditative mood, with eyes inwardly directed, face calm and serene and radiant with inner bliss and limbs scarcely moving. Sitting arrangements were made all over the floor in front of him. All classes of people from far and near came and sat there for *darśan* of the *Mahapuruṣa*. The disciples received them at the lower storey and guided them with all humility to the presence of the *Guru*. Some were specially deputed to see that none might be put to any inconvenience. The people came, bowed before the Yogiraj as before a Divine Image, took their seats according to their convenience, and enjoyed the holy presence of the Yogiraj and the profound silence of the atmosphere. Hours would pass without any talk, without any sound from any quarter. People would enter in silence, sit in silence and depart in silence. But there appeared to be present in that profound silence such a sweetness and charm as to attract the people again and again, day after day, for tasting and enjoying it.

Many men and women were blessed with initiation. Special arrangements were made for them. Most of them were poor from the worldly point of view. Rich men were given their due honours; but very few of them were accepted by him as his disciples. Those who had the vanity of riches in their hearts did not generally find any opportunity even to get into proximity with him. He appeared to be a man of the poor and the poor were always, at least outwardly, his special

favourites. His conduct was found to be so regulated as to infuse strength and dignity into the weak and the poor as well as to demonstrate that they were not only not inferior to the rich and big men of the society, but in many respects superior in the eyes of the Lord. The kitchen and the dining hall of the *áśram* were open to all guests, especially to the poor. It was not generally known how many persons would take meals there during the day. At first the disciples in charge of the department were put to some inconvenience for want of proper estimates. After a few days they began to take the estimates in the morning from the Master himself. The Master with his habitual indifference would tell them that such and such quantities of such and such articles would probably suffice. The disciples knew that his *probability* meant certainty. Afterwards the articles never fell short and were never wasted. Everything went on smoothly.

It was the month of December in 1914. The Yogiraj stayed in Calcutta for about a month. A holy festivity continued during the period. The house he resided in became a place of pilgrimage not only to the religious-minded men and women of all communities and races in Calcutta, but also to those of distant parts of Bengal.

The surgical operation upon his eye became a relatively minor matter. It was successfully performed by Dr. Manard, helped by some other Indian specialists. Dr. Manard was so much moved by the very appearance of the Yogiraj that he exclaimed, "Well, he looks like Jesus Christ." For a few days after the operation, the doors of his house were, in compliance with the directions of the doctors, closed for all visitors, —practically for all but his personal attendants. Even within this prohibited period, some earnest *bhaktas*, happening to come from long distances on short leave with an intense longing for initiation, were blessed with his mercy. His physical fitness and unfitness were completely under his control, though he seldom exercised this power, especially before the eyes of others.

When the doctors declared him fit for removal, he ordered his attendants to arrange for return to Gorakhpur. He could not be persuaded to go to the house of any of his disciples or admirers. Earnest requests for a short trip to Dacca, the metropolis of East Bengal, and some other important places proved equally futile. He would never deviate from his principle.

Before he left Calcutta, the disciples under his instruction took a ceremonial bath in the Holy Ganga and offered a special worship to Káli, the Divine Mother of the universe, at Kálighat, one of the most sacred places where the Divine Mother had Her special self-revelation.

One incident may be noted here by the way. The disciple who bore all the expenses of the Yogiraj's journey and treatment on this occasion, had an earnest desire to witness some occult powers of his *Guru*. One day he expressed the desire to the *Guru*. Perhaps an idea was working in his mind that the Yogiraj being pleased with his services would kindly grant his prayer. Yogiraj with his characteristic calmness told him a story about Gorakhnath, the Master and Guide of himself and all the Yogis. While Gorakhnath was deeply engaged in *tapasya* (austerity) and higher *yogic* culture, a milkman supplied him daily at the appointed time with *páyasánna* (rice boiled in milk) to keep his body fit for *sádhaná* for full twelve years. When this course of discipline was finished, Yogiguru Gorakhnath expressed satisfaction with the services of the milkman and bestowed blessings upon him. The milkman felt a curiosity to witness some of the *yogic* powers of the superhuman saint as a reward for his services. Gorakhnathji at once vomited all the milk and all the rice that he had accepted from the milkman in course of all these twelve years. He thus taught the devoted milkman and through him all the *bhaktas* of the world that no tangible reward should be asked or expected in return for services rendered to the *Guru* or any saint. Services in order to be acceptable to the saints ought to proceed from the true

spirit of worship and selfless service without any wish or hope for return in any shape or form. Not only that; a true disciple or a true servant should never cherish in any corner of his consciousness an idea or belief or feeling that, by virtue of his whole-hearted submission to all the commands or instructions of the *Guru* or his sincere or ungrudging dedication of all his money and energy to the services of the *Guru*, he could establish any special claim upon the personal affection of the *Guru* or a particularly favoured treatment at his hands. Such an idea, feeling or belief would take away a good deal from the spiritual value of true discipleship and true service. Obedience and service were their own rewards, and they made the body and the mind fit for being illumined by the Divine Light. They should not be polluted by any kind of egotism or vanity or worldly desire or idle curiosity.

The disciple took the lesson to his heart, laid his head at the feet of the Master, and with tearful eyes begged his pardon for any sense of vanity or selfish desire or undue claim which might be lurking in his mind. The Yogiraj had not of course taken any offence at his conduct. He had pardoned him before pardon was asked for. He only taught his disciple a valuable lesson in this connection.

But just as Gorakhnath, while giving his humble and devoted servant a good lesson on true service, satisfied the latter's curiosity also by the very miraculous act of vomiting all the milk and all the rice taken during twelve years, Gorakhnath's follower Bábá Gambhirnath also granted the prayer of his disciple in a peculiar and scarcely noticeable manners. His disciples, old and new, and other admirers who came to him for *darśan* and *pranám* ordinarily used to offer at his feet coins, sweets, fruits, etc, as humble tokens of their respect and homage (*pranámi*). The articles were used in the distribution of *prasád* (lit. boon or blessings,—ordinarily meaning articles which are first offered to the Deity and then distributed as His blessings among *bhaktas*) among all the people who assembled there.

But the money received in cash was separately kept by some disciple in charge of the accounts. When, on the eve of return the accounts were settled, it was found to the astonishment of all, that the money obtained from the disciples and admirers and visitors in Calcutta was exactly equivalent to the amount spent to meet all the expenses in connection with the *Guruji's* journey to and stay in Calcutta. This appeared to those who knew the incident to be a little display of *yogic* power, which the Yogiraj condescended to make for the satisfaction of his disciple's humble curiosity, for which he had mildly chastised him. When the bag containing the money was placed before the Yogiraj, he in his habitual unconcerned mood asked the disciples to lay it by for the party's attendance at the *Kumbhamelá*, which was to be held at Hardwar in the month of Chaitra (March-April) following.

Having spent about two months at Gorakhpur, the Yogiraj accompanied by the *sádhus* of the *Math* went to Hardwar to attend the greatest Indian Religious Congress of saints and pious men at the *Kumbhamelá*. Many of the disciples, who had departed to their homes or places of business, joined the party. They naturally considered it an exceptional opportunity of a lifetime to make a pilgrimage to such a holy gathering at such a holy place in company with the holiest person they had ever seen. The Yogiraj took his seat at the Gorakhnath Math of Hardwar in the midst of the *sádhus* of the sect. Among his disciples some dwelt in a rented house and others remained with him as his constant attendants. They obtained the opportunity of seeing the Master of their hearts amidst varying circumstances, in course of the journey as well as at the greatest congregation. What struck them most was that all these external changes could not produce the least change in the mode of his conduct, in his general demeanour, in the outer expressions of his face and limbs, in the super-worldly calmness, serenity and tranquillity of his body and senses and mind, and in the ceaseless continuity of his meditation on the changeless Infinite

and enjoyment of perfect bliss. They seemed to become more deeply conscious of the unique spiritual greatness of their Master, when they found what an extraordinary position he occupied in this congregation of the holiest men of Hindusthan and in what a high estimation he was held by the *sádhus* of all the religious sects, and especially by those whose consciousness was sufficiently refined and enlightened so as to be in communication with his inner consciousness. Saintly men of different schools of religious discipline as well as pious truth-seeking pilgrims used to come daily in large numbers to pay homage to him and to receive his blessings. He silently received and blessed them all. He radiated spirituality from his seat to the entire atmosphere. To him there was no difference between sects and sects, communities and communities, ascetics and householders, men and women. He was all-love and all-mercy to all kinds of people. He saw the same Spirit in all and this seeing itself was a great force to awaken the Spirit in them. He scarcely moved from his seat.

On one occasion there was an unfortunate quarrel between two powerful sub-sects of the *Náth-yogi sampradáya* with regard to their respective claims on some matters. Such quarrels, leading sometimes even to the breaking of heads and bruising of limbs, though very rare, are not altogether unknown among the so-called *sádhus*, who do not earnestly and systematically discipline the body and mind for achieving the end for which they had left home and society, and who, though liberated from normal domestic and social responsibilities, allow themselves in the *sannyása* life to be slaves of passion and prejudice and sectarian fanaticism. The Yogiraj, though present in their midst, was absolutely unconcerned. Noisy expressions of fury on both sides and even exchanges of brickbats and displays of words made by the most rowdy elements could not bring him down from his spiritual height or create any ripples on the serene flow of his meditation. Though both the parties had faith in and reverence for him, he would not of his own

accord interfere in such cases even for restoration of peace and harmony. He would allow the unseemly incidents to go on and exhaust themselves out and would see undisturbed the Divine order in them. Only when appeal was made to him by the parties, he appeared to become conscious of the affair, and then he would, with his tranquillity and unconcernedness completely undisturbed, pass his judgment in a few words and point out the noble path to justice, righteousness, reconciliation and saintly conduct. Without waiting for the results of his words, he would again be immersed in deep meditation. In the present case also he behaved in his usual way. But the atmosphere of the monastery continued to be heated, agitated and troubled for some days.

After this incident his disciples insisted that he should leave the *áśram* to the *sádhus* for settling their quarrels by themselves and kindly permit them to take him to a quiet rented house, where they would be able to enjoy his company quite freely and without any disturbance. He smilingly granted them permission and went with them to a comfortable house near by. He would now and then ask his disciples to go round the *Melá* and have *darśan* of the saints. He cautioned them against regarding the rowdyism they witnessed as representing the general character of the *sádhus* and as reflecting the true life of the great congregation. Such incidents, he said, were most exceptional and should be forgotten. He further instructed them not to approach the saints with any motive or expectation, not to be desirous of seeing anything miraculous in their conduct, not to compare or contrast the life or spiritual power of one saint with that of another, not to look down upon anyone whose outer behaviour might not fit in with their own ideal nor to make an exaggerated estimate of anyone in whom they might find indications of extraordinary austerity or self-mortification or expressions of wonder-working occult powers. He would teach them to see the same Supreme Spirit (*Paramátmá*) in all the saints and to bow down to them from that

angle of vision. Though outwardly differing from and disagreeing with one another in dresses and manners, in modes of life and forms of religious discipline, in dogmas and creeds and ideologies, in moral, intellectual and spiritual attainments and refinements, all these *sádhus*, the Yogiraj would ask his disciples to bear always in mind, renounced the worldly prospects and enjoyments and adopted certain courses of physical, mental and religious discipline for the sake of the same ultimate spiritual Ideal, for the attainment of the same final deliverance from the world and realisation of unity with the Divine. They all represented or symbolised the Spiritual Ideal of Humanity. Each of them ought to be respected as an embodiment of one of the multi-form self-expressions of that Supreme Ideal. The *Kumbhamelá* held periodically in the four most important religious centres of *Bháratbarsha*, was a living and moving exhibition of the eternal and universal Spiritual Ideal of Humanity as well as of the diverse channels and various grades of Its realisation. It showed where the real vitality and strength and glory of *Bháratbarsha* lay and what splendid contribution to the world-culture she had been making from the beginningless past and was destined to make through eternity. It further exhibited and demonstrated how innumerable and variegated were the paths of spiritual self-realisation, how all the differences of paths vanished in the lives in which the goal was reached, how the votaries of diverse systems of religious culture with diverse creeds and practices could live together in perfect peace and harmony and embrace one another in perfect friendliness and mutual reverence, how the differences could be ignored as insignificant in view of the identity of the immanent Ideal and the sense of the unity could be made to pervade the entire consciousness. These lessons, the Yogiraj would mildly point out, ought to be learnt from this magnificent congregation of *sádhus* by all truth-seeking pilgrims. It was a long-standing brilliant example of the Harmony of Faiths, which this age sought after and so urgently required.

According to the directions of the *Guru*, the disciples paid visits and made obeisance to the *sádhus* of all the diverse orders and sects and tried to see and revere them in the light obtained from him. The Yogiraj, in spite of his profound silence and deeply meditative mood, appeared to take every opportunity to refine and enlighten the outlook of his disciples and the truth-seeking people in general. Progressive refinement and enlightenment of outlook seemed from his teachings to be the essence of spiritual progress, which reached its highest stage when all the things, living as well as non-living, and all the phenomena, natural as well as human, were viewed and actually experienced as the sublime and beautiful self-expressions of the eternally pure and good and blissful Supreme Spirit.

The disciples were directed to take bath in the sacred Gangá at the appointed times in accordance with the *śástric* injunctions. But, it was pointed out to them, they should try sincerely and earnestly to follow the spirit of the *śástras* which were recognised as authoritative in their community, and not their particular sayings or statements detached from their context or unrelated to the spirit. For example, *Brahma Kunda* (a particular part of the Gangá at Hardwar) was described as possessing a special sanctity, and ablutions in it at specified times as possessing special merits. Countless people, attempting to bathe in that particular spot at the same time, were found to constitute a struggling and fighting crowd, and many persons were found to lose their lives in the *melée*. Could this be the intention of the *śástra* that pious people should fight with and kill one another in a hard competition for acquiring greater spiritual merits ? Was it possible for the people to concentrate their attention upon the true Spiritual Ideal and to keep their minds pure and tranquil, when the struggle for existence itself in the crowd was so hard ? Could there be true spiritual merits in a bath or any ritual, in which the mental state just before and after it was anything but spiritual ? The Yogiraj directed his disciples not to enter into the struggle, but to take bath in the

Gangá at any *ghat*, *i.e.* at any part of it, where they could perform their ablutions with a true devotional attitude, with undisturbed purity and tranquillity, with their minds fixed upon and offered to the Supreme Spiritual Source and Sustainer of Mother Gangá. The disciples acted accordingly. The Yogiraj himself could not go to the *ghat* owing to physical weakness. But he showed respect for religious practice by sprinkling on his head the water brought for him by the disciples. He always dwelt in a plane of consciousness which was above all merits and demerits. But he never failed to show proper regard for the *śástric* injunctions.

Having spent about a month at Hardwar, the Yogiraj returned to Gorakhpur. Among his disciples, some accompanied him, some went direct to their places of business, and some stayed on at Hardwar for a few days for some reason or other.

During the next Pujá holidays in the month of October, 1915, there was again a large congregation of *sádhus* and disciples in the Gorakhnath Temple. Many new religious aspirants were initiated into the path of spirituality. One day a medical man in Government service came from the farthest corner of the Garhwal district to get initiation from him, and departed the same day after having been blessed with his mercy. *Navarátra utsab* was celebrated in the *áśram* with the usual rites and formalities. On the Vijoya day the Yogiraj rode on his favourite elephant to *Mansar*, throwing on both sides all along the way copper coins, which were picked up with great delight by the poor boys and girls, who joined the procession of *sádhus* and *bhaktas* accompanying him. It was a joyful custom in the *áśram*. *Ram-lila* was enacted on a maidan near by and it was attended by the Yogiraj with his disciples. On the next newmoon (*Amábasvá*) day, *Deepáli* (illumination) *utsab* was performed and the Yogiraj delightfully encouraged it.

We have in a foregoing chapter noted how he encouraged and joined the popular forms of worship and popular religious

festivities and rejoicings and explained to his disciples their social, national and spiritual significance. In his behaviour towards the disciples as well as the other people who came to him for *darśan* and *pranám*, he appeared to become more and more motherly during the closing years of his earthly life, though there was no change in his gravity, calmness and flow of meditation. All of them deeply felt his love and affection, his motherly attention towards their wants and complaints, the softness of his sympathy for their weaknesses and infirmities. The troubles and difficulties experienced by the disciples living at distant places appeared to be reflected on his consciousness. It was found on several occasions that the Yogiraj awoke suddenly from his meditation and with some degree of concern talked and enquired about this or that disciple; the attendants by his side were taken by surprise; it was known afterwards that the disciple about whom the *Guruji* showed this concern was just at that time suffering from some intense trouble of body or mind and got rid of it in some unexpected, inexplicable or mysterious way. Such instances confirmed and strengthened the belief in the minds of the disciples that even when they were apparently at a distance from the *Guru*, they were not out of his mind, that his watchful eyes and protective hands were always with them, that he always stood by them and gave them relief in times of dangers and difficulties. They learnt to make their minds more and more free from the cares and anxieties of the world, in the belief based on experience that the Almighty and All-knowing *Guru*, however deeply absorbed in the enjoyment of Supreme Bliss within Himself, was not unmindful of their conditions, that His spiritual power would always conquer the hostile worldly forces for their good and that His loving heart would surely arrange for what was best for them in this world. Faith in the *Guru's* love for them and experiences of its indications in their practical life enhanced the intensity of their love and devotion to His person as well as to the Ideal of life He presented before them. This love for the personality

of the *Guru* was a great spiritual asset in the lives of many of the disciples. This love,—and this love alone—disentangled some of his disciples from their worldly ties and acted as a living force to mould their life in accordance with the Ideal set up by the *Guru*.

In summer the Yogiraj used to go to villages and place himself in the midst of the poor and downtrodden people within the estate of the Gorakhnath Temple. Among them he was as the embodiment of charity. He actively sympathised with their wants and sufferings and gave them as much relief as possible, without of course exercising his occult powers. They felt that this God-like man, who was altogether indifferent to all worldly concerns and was inwardly one with the Supreme Deity, had a soft heart full of love and sympathy for them. With regard to the sorrows and difficulties, in which they obtained no actual relief from him, they found solace in the idea that they were reaping the fruits of their past mis-deeds, expiating the sins of their previous lives and being gradually purified through these sufferings, and that even God Himself with all His love and sympathy for them and with His infinite power and glory could not violate the *Law of Karma* and confer happiness on them at that time. With the Yogiraj present before them, they were inspired with hope for a brighter future and ultimate deliverance from all sorrows and bondages. They were heartened up with the consciousness that they had a place in the heart of this God-man.

The Pujá holidays of 1916 also passed in the usual way. The disciples enjoyed his company and spiritually also came nearer to him. Their number also gradually increased. Autumn passed, yielding place to Winter. The Yogiraj had a fit of asthma, attended with fever. Outwardly he was ill, and inwardly he transcended his bodily consciousness and enjoyed the bliss of his spiritual nature. To his attendants he seemed to be slowly taking leave of the outer world. Medicine he did not refuse. But it gave only temporary relief, and produced

no permanent effects. One of his favourite disciples and constant attendants once took the liberty of telling him,—"Bábá (Father), why don't you out of mercy to us only will to be cured ? We know that your health and disease, life and death are in your own hands. Everything depends on your own will. Kindly exercise your will a little for our sake." The Yogiraj calmly responded,—"Should my will revolt against the will of the Lord ?" It became almost clear to them that it was perhaps the will of the Lord, and therefore his will, to bring his earthly existence soon to an end. When they were thinking of giving information to the disciples of different places, he unexpectedly became all right. Their apprehension was removed. Perhaps he did not like that the disciples should undertake the difficult journey to Gorakhpur and gather in large numbers in the *áśram*.

Brahmachari Jajneswar and Babu Barada Kanta Basu, who after Brahmachari Kalinath had the exceptional good fortune of rendering personal service to the *Guru* for a pretty long period, were with him and devoted their whole energy to give him physical comforts and to restore him to his normal health. Bábá Brahmanath, though engaged in the onerous task of ritualistic *pujá* in the Temple, was all attention to him. Sreeman Nanoo Singh, who had been handed over by somebody to the care of the Yogiraj in early childhood and brought up as his fosterchild and who was at that time a mere boy reading in the local High English School, was also by his side and helped the others in their services as much as he could. It may be noted here by the way that this fosterchild of the Yogiraj, having received secular education on modern lines and moral training under his own care in the *áśram*, was greatly serviceable to Bábá Brahmanath in securing the position of *Mohunt* after the death of the old Mohant Bábá Sundernath and that he himself became a *Kanphat Yogi* with his new name, Digbijoynath, and succeeded Bábá Brahmanath on his death as the head of the Monastery, which position he still occupies.

He is now the President of an All-India Organisation of the *Náth-yogi sampradáya*, which he is trying to develop in various directions.

Sádhu Santinath, the Yogiraj's first Bengali disciple, whom he had initiated into the path of absolute renunciation and deep meditation and who was then under his instruction engaged in whole-time *sádhaná* at Hrishikesh, was with his permission brought down to Gorakhpur by wire. He also devoted himself to the service of the *Guru*. The Yogiraj did not permit his attendants to give any trouble to his lay disciples suffering under the burden of the world. Perhaps it was out of deep sympathy for them that he pretended to be getting well. But still some people came for *darśan*.

In early Spring, 1917, he went to *Yogi-chowk*, where he used to attend and offer worship to the shrine of *Śiva* on the occasion of *S'iva-Rátri* every year. He was physically weak, but otherwise seemed all right. Whenever anybody asked him how he was, he would invariably answer with his characteristic calmness, "All right." His flow of meditation, however, seemed to be more and more deepened. The little attention he had been used to spend in external affairs appeared to be gradually withdrawn. He became more and more indifferent even to the management of the *áśram*. All these indicated something, which was not of course to the liking of those around him. They apprehended separation from him.

His Bengali disciples expressed their eagerness to take him to Calcutta for systematic treatment and also for surgical operation of the cataract in his other eye. Being always in a super-worldly plane of consciousness he would sometimes assent and sometimes not in an absent-minded manner. The attendants were confounded. They could not understand his intentions. Once it was almost settled that he would go to Calcutta. Even a house was engaged. But the programme suddenly changed. The Yogiraj expressed his desire to go to *mofussil*. He did not clearly state what *mofussil* he meant.

The attendants took it to mean some rural locality within the Zemindary of Gorakhnath. When they pleaded for Calcutta, he gravely replied that *mofussil* was a cool place, it was calm and quiet, there would be no disturbance there, all the surroundings would be sweet and pleasant, and his health would be completely restored there. Those who came to argue were silenced. Nothing could be more desirable to them than the restoration of his health. They could not however imagine that the region which the Yogiraj meant by the term *mofussil* was the region of absolute peace and bliss, where he would be perfectly himself, free from all kinds of disease and disturbance, all forms of bondage and limitation.

The Yogiraj sent for the Pundit of the *àśram*. Punditji came. He was asked to consult the *Panjika* (almanac) and find out an auspicious day and an auspicious moment for departure from the *áśram*. In deference to Hindu traditions the Yogiraj used to consult the *Panjiká*. Nothing unusual was therefore noticed in this behaviour on his part. It struck none that he was fixing the date and moment of his final departure from the world. The Pundit found that *Madhu Krishná Trayodashi* (the thirteenth lunar day of the dark fortnight of the month of Chaitra), which fell on the 8th Chaitra of the Hindu Solar year (1323 B.S.) and the 21st March of the Christian year (1917), was a very auspicious day. It was a day held as specially holy by all Hindus, and a ceremonial bath in the Gangá on that day, called the *Mahá Báruni* day, was believed to be a source of great religious merits. 9-15 a.m. of that day was calculated to be a particularly auspicious moment for *Játrá* (departure). The Yogiraj signified his approval of the judgment of the Pundit. The attendants commenced arrangements for his journey to *mofussil*, so that there might not be any strain upon his delicate health. They had not the slightest suspicion that the Yogiraj had selected the particular moment of the particular day for his return to the ultimate Source of his being and that their arrangements were altogether futile for that journey.

On the day previous to the said auspicious day, the Yogiraj courted a fresh fit of asthma and a slight attack of fever. The attendants were anxious. They wanted to cancel what they took for his tour programme. The Yogiraj vetoed it. In the last part of the night he sat on his bed as usual in a *yogic* posture and immersed in the deepest meditation. He did not turn back to worldly consciousness. Just at 9-15 a.m. of the auspicious day fixed for his departure, all signs of life disappeared from the physical body. His individual existence was finally merged in the Universal Existence-Consciousness-Bliss (*Sat-Chid-Ananda*). He became perfectly identified with the Divine.

The physical body, which had so long presented him as an individual, was now ceremoniously put in the same sitting posture in a deep cavity dug in a conspicuous spot in front of the *áśram*. Mother earth received and embraced his sacred body,—the body which had for so many years borne within it a perfectly Godly life, which had for two generations presented before the human society a living image of the union of Humanity and Divinity, of Individuality and Universality, of worldly physical existence and supramundane spiritual consciousness.

His devoted disciples constructed a temple of stone on the spot and installed a marble statue within it, where there is arrangement for regular worship to his immortal Spirit.